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THESIS

CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL as an AID TO MANAGEMENT

by

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(A.B. Boston College, 1937)

submitted in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the degree of

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. AIM OF THESIS

Management is entrusted with the setting up of standards, their supervision and control. It is the duty of management to reduce costs, without impairing either the efficiency of the operation or the quality of the product.

There is one field which has received relatively little attention in the surging progress of scientific management. This field is correspondence control, which covers generally the setting up of the standards of business letters and supervision of these standards. There is reason to believe, as will be indicated below, that this attention, long overdue, will shortly be paid to an increasing degree.

The aim of this thesis is to act as a guide for the office manager who would investigate the problem of correspondence control in his own company. It will attempt to be a sort of handbook indicating the main problems he will meet and how they have been met by other managers: it will try to indicate the best approach to the task of correspondence control.

In the introduction is stressed the importance of correspondence; the main tasks are outlined; the proper point of view is defined; finally a short background of the history of correspondence control is included, ending with its present status in the management scheme of things.



## B. THE IMPORTANCE OF CORRESPONDENCE

Perhaps the most impressive way to point up the need for correspondence control is simply to mention the size of the mail-bag the U.S. Post Office Dept. carries for the nation's business each year. And then as simply to state the amount paid willingly by the nation's business for its correspondence.

It is estimated that between 5 billion and 12 billion pieces of domestic first class mail are posted each year by business houses. Somewhere between  $2\frac{1}{2}$  billion and 6 billion dollars is the cost of producing these letters.

This is how these estimates were derived. From the 1944 Post Office figures we learn that about 20 billion pieces of first class matter entered the domestic mails that year.<sup>1</sup> Benjamin R. Haynes and Irol Whitmore figure that about 25% of the total first class domestic mail is business letters.<sup>2</sup> This gives us the lower limit of 5 billion letters. Genevieve E. Morin, writing in the NOMA Forum for May 1947 is more liberal in her estimate, setting 60% as her guess.<sup>3</sup> This gives us 12 billion pieces for the upper limit.

1. Cost Ascertainment Report 1944, United States Post Office Page 11, Table V, as reported by Genevieve Morin (see below)
2. Benjamin R. Haynes and Irol Whitmore, Mechanics of Business Letter Writing, Knoxville, Univ. of Tenn. 1942 P.5
3. Genevieve E. Morin, "The Case for the Simplified Letter" NOMA Forum, May 1947.



As we shall see later (Chapter III) several independent surveys set the cost of one business letter between 40 and 70 cents. Using 50 cents as a conservative multiplier for the range of letters mailed, the cost of producing these 5 to 12 billion business letters runs between  $2\frac{1}{2}$  and 6 billion dollars.

Now, the thoughtful manager seeing this staggering charge to overhead on a national scale might well ask himself whether his company is spending too much money answering a sales inquiry or making an adjustment. Or more important, whether the money is spent effectively. One investigator found after analysis of a company's correspondence costs, that the annual bill ran to \$94,500.<sup>1</sup> This actually was more than the company spent for advertising.

The advertising budget of this company undoubtedly was scrutinized, and rightly so. Yet the larger charge for its letters suffered no comparable control. In many ways of course, the advertising budget lends itself to more obvious checking; space rates are predictable, the copy-writer's fee is known, cost-per-inquiry is easy to find, the rates of advertising cost to gross sales is fairly well fixed in a given industry.

But the costs of sending a letter are hidden costs,

1. Hiram N. Rasely, in Office Management - A Handbook, editor, Coleman L. Maze, New York, Ronald Press 1947, Chapter 18, Page 567.



so long as it is not known how many letters a dictating-typing team can deliver, nor how efficiently space, materials and equipment may be utilized. Hence the costs are accepted: they end up as a sizeable but unrecognized padding of the indirect costs account.

The hidden costs of a business letter which can be disclosed and measured in accounting terms - the time of dictator and typist, charges for material and equipment, burden charges of rent, light, heat, power - these costs are still not the only element in the cost control of correspondence. How effectively the letter does its job of communication is far more important, because the cost of a poor letter is really hidden and not to be disclosed by any mathematical method.

The cost of a poor letter is the more disastrous because it seldom comes to light. An ill-advised collection letter, a brusque letter of adjustment, an incomplete answer to a sales inquiry - these undoubtedly lose many customers day after day. It is never known why they are lost. They just stop buying. Statler, of hotel note, made famous the saying, 'It is easier to get a customer than to get him back'. Here then is the real loss, the heaviest cost of ineffective correspondence.

### C. MAIN TASKS OF IMPROVEMENT AND CONTROL

#### 1. TO INCREASE EFFECTIVENESS OF CORRESPONDENCE

What makes a letter effective? There are two elements in the effective letter:



1. The simple, clear presentation of the information required.
2. The good-will which it creates.

Every letter leaving the office of a company is that company's representative. The business letter makes a definite impression on its recipient: it is the interpreter. How tremendously important, therefore, to control the impression the letter will make. Letting an inexperienced or untrained correspondent represent the company in a business letter is as dangerous as sending on the road a salesman without training, or an agent without experience in translating company policy into action.

Charles R. Riker, Supervisor of Extension Training of the Westinghouse Company says, "effective correspondence is just as definitely a part of the general sales program as are calls by salesmen." <sup>1</sup>

And in the letter-writing manual of a large company handling a tremendous number of inquiries, we read: <sup>2</sup>

"A letter which fails to increase our good will..or to give him all the information he has the right to expect is almost as bad as no letter at all..Let no letter leave the office if it is brief to the point of curt-ness or if there is the slightest hint of impatience implied in any sentence."

1. "Promoting Better Letters" in Executives Service Bulletin published N.Y. Met. Life Insurance Co. Feb.1945 Page 3
2. "Communications in Business," a feature in American Business, January 1944, Page 40.



## 2. TO REDUCE COSTS

The sound program of correspondence control looks first to the effectiveness of letters, then to the reduction of costs. As a matter of fact, we might say the reduction of letter-writing costs naturally follows as a result of increasing the effectiveness of letters. For example, in one firm the new correspondence supervisor encouraged the correspondents to do these things: first, to come directly to the point in opening the letter; second, to cut out all stereotyped phraseology; third, to close the letter without the futile and hackneyed trappings tradition seemed to insist upon, e.g. 'Assuring you of our cooperation, and hoping you will do this or that, we remain.' In three months, the average lineage per letter dropped from 16.5 to 11.2.<sup>1</sup> Here was a 30% saving of dictating and typing time, as well as reduction in the use of material and equipment, which came about because the letters were made more effective.

### D. BETTER LETTERS, NOT LOWER COSTS

The point of view is everything in the task of improving correspondence. The wise manager approaches his problem primarily to make his company's letters, better letters. He knows that letters which are more effective will not only reduce the cost but actually bring extra profits to the company.

1. From an interview with Hiram N. Rasely, director of the Better Letters Institute, Boston, November 14, 1947.



How is this true? Every letter is a sales letter:<sup>1</sup>  
 that is, it persuades the reader to take action favorable  
 toward the company. Even in letters where this favorable  
 action is not direct and immediate, as it is in sales and col-  
 lection letters, there is the opportunity to create goodwill.  
 A foundation, built of friendliness and service, can be laid  
 against future action. The cumulative effect of better  
 letters may not be measured accurately, but there can be no  
 doubt of its great value.

The danger of approaching correspondence control from  
 a cost viewpoint is that the business letter may be considered  
 simply as a product to be ground out of a well-engineered  
 hopper.<sup>2</sup> Companies have hired "efficiency experts" who pro-  
 ceeded to reduce correspondence costs. Cheaper stationery,  
 lower salaried stenos, a higher daily quota for correspondents  
 are usually among the recommendations. And considerable sav-  
 ings are effected. But as Hotchkiss says:<sup>3</sup>

"The effectiveness of such letters  
 was so reduced that the resultant  
 trouble and loss of business more  
 than offset the saving."

Better letters, then, not lower costs must be the  
 goal of the manager who would control and improve correspondence.

1. Hiram N. Rasely, Better Letters, Boston, Better Letters  
 Institute, Boston, November 14, 1947 Page 8.
2. George B. Hotchkiss and Edward J. Kilduff assisted by  
 J. Harold Janis, Advanced Business Correspondence,  
 New York Harper & Bros. 1947, Page 484.
3. IBID Page 484



A better letter builds goodwill, draws a consistently friendly picture of the company in the reader's mind. It creates the idea of a human being talking things over in friendly fashion instead of a cold corporate machine grinding out clichés with well-inked rubber stamps. Mr. L. E. Frailey writes of certain business letters which he chose as outstanding: <sup>1</sup>

"They are just good letters - milled by men whose hearts are ever warm with human understanding, whose language is marked with the distinction of ease and simplicity, which is reflected in all they say...In each case you feel that a man is talking...a man with a smile.. a man you would enjoy knowing intimately."

#### E. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

##### 1. BEGINNINGS TO THE PRESENT DAY <sup>2</sup>

Correspondence control had its first practical beginning in 1915 under Charles L. Allen, President of the Norton Company in Worcester, Mass. Mr. Allen for sometime had been conscious that the correspondence of his company needed supervision. He felt the letters leaving his offices were too long, full of stereotyped and hackneyed verbiage, in general ineffective and costly. He himself had the reputation of

1. Smooth Sailing Letters, New York, Prentice Hall 1938  
Page 105.
2. I am indebted for the major portion of this review to Mr. Hiram N. Rasely, (who has been called "Father of the Better Letter Movement") in a series of interviews in December 1947.



never writing a letter longer than four lines. He looked for a man who could improve the Norton Company's letters, making them concise, without curtness, effective yet less expensive.

The man he chose was Hiram N. Rasely, producer of the Norton Letter.

The Norton Letter was the first successful attempt to set up correspondence standards. It is discussed in greater detail in a later chapter. But its main points of departure were these:

1. Simple to-the-point language
2. Friendly human tone
3. A subject-heading
4. Specific rules of placement & punctuation
5. Elimination of the complimentary opening & close
6. Short letters on short stationery, longer letters on standard size
7. Use of a window envelope through a fixed placement of inside address.

The standards were based on the original analysis of the Company's correspondence by Mr. Rasely. They were installed and maintained by methods which included systematic instruction of dictators and stenographers, dictator's and stenographers' manuals, regular bulletins, constant supervision of carbons. One indication of the immediate improvement was in the reduction of lineage per letter, as mentioned previously, from 16.5 before standards, to 11.2 lines after standards were set up.

Interest was not long in showing itself all over



the country among thoughtful correspondents and office managers. Requests poured in for explanations of his methods. In the next few years, hundreds of visitors came to the Norton Company's offices to see how the Norton Letter came about.

The Better Letters Association grew out of these visits. In 1917 Mr. Rasely founded it in order to give wider and more systematic broadcasting to correspondence control. The Association met once a year for three years. At these meetings well-known speakers on the problems of correspondence addressed executives and correspondents from all over the nation. These meetings, open to all interested in correspondence control, were attended by hundreds and received enthusiastically.

In 1919, in order to find a larger vehicle for his ideas on scientific office management, Mr. Rasely suggested to a few other office managers the idea of a National Association of Office Managers. The idea caught on because such an organization was needed. It started in the same period during which scientific management received its greatest impetus when the ideas of Taylor and Gilbreth and Leffingwell began to get serious hearing all over the country.

Mr. Harry A. Hopf schedules the decade, 1910 to 1919 as follows:

1

1. In an address "Office Management: Its Development and Future," NOMA PROCEEDINGS 1942, 23rd Annual Conference.



- 1910 - Launching of the scientific management movement by Frederick W. Taylor and his associates.
- 1912 - Founding of the Society to Promote the Science of Management, later the Taylor Society; now the Society for the Advancement of Management.
- 1913 - Establishment of the National Association of Corporation Schools, principal precursor of the American Management Association.
- 1917 - Organization of the Society of Industrial Engineers, now the Society for the Advancement of Management.
- 1919 - Formation of National Association Office Management Association.
- 1919 - Formation of the National Association of Cost Accountants.

The National Office Management Association, as it is now called grew and prospered. It directed its efforts, however, to the broader aspects of scientific office management. It is only in this year of 1947, twenty-eight years later, that it has taken up the gauntlet thrown down by Rasely so many years ago. The Simplified Letter of NOMA is the present attempt to encourage on a national scale acceptance of the same principles of better letters put forth by Rasely in 1915. The circle took a generation to come full turn.

Early in the twenties Hiram Rasely entered the field of business education. At present he is the Executive Vice-President of Burdett College in Boston as well as Director of the Better Letters Institute (newly reorganized.) Without the drive of one man behind it there was not the general acceptance of scientific control of correspondence that other aspects of scientific management received.



Even so, many companies throughout the country followed Rasely's pioneering. Mr. Paul McBride, Office Service Manager of Dennison Mfg. Company said proudly: <sup>1</sup>

"We recognized the importance of correspondence control as early as twenty five years ago. We are pioneers in that field."

Dennison's was one of the first companies to use a centralized transcription department, to offer an incentive to transcribers based on time and motion study, to employ a correspondence supervisor and to make regular analysis of carbons to check the quality of Dennison letters.

By 1930 there was a wide cross-section throughout the larger elements of American industry using some or all of the principles of correspondence control. Some used correspondence supervisors as such, others had developed central transcribing departments, many had dictator's and typist's manuals, all took some steps to improve the effectiveness and thus reduce the costs of correspondence. Represented were mainly large to medium sized companies and to be honest they were the exception, rather than the rule.

Banks included the Commercial Investment Trust of New York, the Bank of Italy in San Francisco; insurance was represented by the Provident Mutual Life Insurance Co. of Phila. and the Lincoln National Life Insurance Co. of Fort Wayne, Ind; mail order houses, as might have been expected,

1. During an interview at the main office of the company Framingham, Mass. October 31, 1947.



early recognized the value of correspondence - represented are Montgomery-Ward and Alden's of Chicago; manufacturers included L. Greif & Bros. of Baltimore, American Optical Co. of Southbridge, Mass.; public utilities had American Tel. & Tel. Co., Western Union Telegraph Co.; and education showed Oregon State University. <sup>1</sup>

During the depression years the rule was retrenchment. <sup>2</sup>  
 Very little progress was made toward common acceptance of correspondence control. Infact, according to Mr. McBride of Dennison's the correspondence supervisor was usually among the first to go. So, at his firm in 1932, the title was abolished, although for the most part the system remained unchanged: the duties were absorbed by the office manager. <sup>3</sup>

The war years of course did not encourage administrative control of this nature. Office managers had a difficult enough job with undermanned staffs to keep up with the abnormal increase of paper work due to government contracts and new legislation. There was however some attempt in government bureaus to improve control as evidenced by the 30-page booklet prepared by

1. "Centralized Correspondence Departments" a short brochure prepared by Policyholders Service Bureau, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, New York 1930 Page 7.
2. Mr. Hiram Rasely in interviews December 1947 in Boston.
3. In interview October 31, 1947 at Framingham, Mass. In this regard, Professor W. P. deMille, secretary of American Business Writers Association, in Boston interview Jan.7, 1948 said, "Correspondence supervisors are considered a luxury. They are the first to feel the axe."



Charles H. Nieman for the Inter-Agency Correspondence Management Conference. The Division of Training, U.S. Civil Service Commission sponsored this booklet called "Warizing Correspondence and its Management", in November 1942. The main features of "Warizing" were establishment of form letters to cover most situations, and simplifying the routine of handling correspondence. Its purposes as expressed in a sort of sub-title were:

1. To reduce correspondence time and costs.
2. To release for more urgent war work stenos, typists, file clerks and letter dictators.

## 2. THE SITUATION NOW - THE POST-WAR ERA

Now there are two phenomena evident in the field of correspondence control. Perhaps it would be closer to the mark to say they are opposite sides of the same medal. One phenomenon is the renewed interest in better letters: the other, the need for correspondence control leading to better letters.

The renewed interest in better letters is indicated by the present experience of the Better Letters Clinic organized by the Better Letter Institute in January 1948 in Boston: and of the Frailey-Aurner Clinic for Business Letters Writers organized in Chicago under the auspices of the Dartnell Corp.

The plan of the Better Letters Institute met approval from its threefold market: <sup>1</sup>

1. These data gathered in interviews with the staff of the Better Letters Institute, Boston January 1948.



1. Business Letter writers in Boston flocked to the modern stream-lined course in Better Letters held at the Institute Headquarters.
2. Many large business firms requested Institute specialists to hold clinics in their offices and help settle on the spot, correspondence problems.
3. Educational institutions in various parts of the country sought franchises to conduct the course in their areas.

Mr. L. E. Frailey and Professor R.R.Aurner found similar enthusiasm in 1947 when they conducted in Chicago, the first of their dramatic presentations of methods to improve business letters. <sup>1</sup> Over 400 correspondents from leading business houses attended the five-weeks seminar held in a large Chicago hotel. The reception they received in Chicago was so warm, that Frailey and Aurner decided to produce their clinic in the large cities of the nation.

Both L. E. Frailey & Professor Aurner have long been associated with correspondence improvement. Mr. Frailey has acted as correspondence consultant for many firms and has written several books on the subject, including Smooth Sailing Letters, considered a classic of its kind, and A Handbook of Correspondence published in January 1948. Professor Aurner, on the Business Administration faculty of the University of Wisconsin teaches the subject and has written Effective Business Correspondence.

1. These facts drawn from circular announcing the Frailey-Clinic to subscribers of Dartnell Corp. publications. The clinic came to Boston March 5, while the circulars were distributed in December 1947.



The other side of the medal - the need for correspondence control - is highlighted in the preliminary report of a survey of Correspondence Supervision, conducted on a national scale by the American Business Writers Association, late in 1947.<sup>1</sup> A questionnaire was circulated among business houses of various kinds and sizes, designed to show the incidence and the kind of correspondence supervision. Although the returns were as yet fragmentary in January 1948, Prof. W. P. deMille, Secretary of the organization stated, that according to the present trend 'only one of four companies is doing anything to produce better letters.'

To support this conclusion Professor deMille pointed out, that from the partially tabulated returns in the New England area, of 93 companies replying (140 circularized) only 11 employed a correspondence supervisor as such. 30 other companies were interested or took some measures to insure the maximum effectiveness of their letters. These measures included instruction memos to dictators or typists, a letter writing course in the company, checking by the central transcription supervisor for appearance, construction and diction of the letters, and so on.

Now, 52 of those replying showed negative interest in correspondence supervision. When this is added to those

1. From an interview with Professor W. P. deMille, Secretary of the ABWA, at Boston University, January 7, 1948



who did not reply - 47 - we have 99 of 140 who are not doing anything to produce better letters, roughly 1 out of 4. The secretary reasoned that those who did not reply were not interested. The presumption is that these companies do not employ correspondence control as part of their routine.

Professor deMille's conclusion is borne out in the statement accompanying the preliminary figures sent to him from the Detroit area, the only other section replying by Jan. 1948. Professor Lyda McHenry of Wayne University, who conducted the Detroit survey suggests:

"There is a need for special publicized information of the valuable contribution a correspondence specialist could make in public relations and business promotion activities."



## CHAPTER II

### LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

#### A. THE FOUR ELEMENTS

To lay out a program of correspondence control there are four elements which must be considered: <sup>1</sup>

1. Stimulating interest in better letters
2. Training dictators and stenographers
3. Supervision
4. Systematization of handling of correspondence.

In a given company, each element will receive more or less attention depending on the circumstances. For example, in a small company stimulating interest may be the most difficult task and hence will tax the manager's ingenuity. Whereas, in a larger company systematization may be difficult due to the disruption of procedure and may take a long time to evolve. In any event, all four elements will be found in the company which controls its correspondence.

This chapter will merely sketch the significance of each element. Reserved for a later chapter will be the methods whereby each element may be worked into the program.

#### 1. STIMULATING INTEREST IN BETTER LETTERS

If these elements are considered members of an arch,

1. Adapted from Advanced Business Correspondence by George B. Hotchkiss, Edward J. Kilduff, assisted by J. Harold Janis, New York, Harper Bros. 1947, Page 485.



the first - stimulating interest - would be the keystone.<sup>1</sup>  
 Without an active belief among the entire corresponding staff, from the top executive who dictates policy letters to the lowest junior steno who types routine letters, that better letters are necessary, the whole structure may collapse. Allan Mogensen says of work simplification in an office, 'they must want it, or it won't work. Therefore they must be sold.'<sup>2</sup>

There are two commonly unrealized facts about business letters which, realized, will make it easy to stimulate interest. WHAT IS A LETTER? - Correspondence Control at first blush seems such a simple thing. Merely get the company's letters written as effectively and inexpensively as possible. Without too much thought a manager can say:

"Why anyone can write a letter who speaks passable English. And as for inexpensively, heavens, my toughest job is to stop my people from grabbing the phone or sending a wire, when a letter would do just as well and far more cheaply."

And there is the rub. For some unknown reason, the business man who speaks even the best English, who expresses himself aptly face to face, more often than not - in fact, it can almost be said, as a general rule - in dictating a business letter uses an outmoded jargon that bears no resemblance to his

1. So, in a sales letter or any selling job the first problem is arousing interest and attention.
2. "Work Simplification in Offices", NOMA Proceedings 1946 annual edition.



every day speech. He does not think in terms of the English he speaks. He thinks in terms of formulae, of standard expressions passed down through the ages to cover every business situation. Rather than say what he has to say, simply and directly, as he would over the phone, he dips into his bag of clichés:

"We beg to advise and wish to state  
That yours has arrived of recent date:  
We have it before us, its contents noted 1  
Herewith enclosed are the prices quoted."

Therefore why put them there? If the information is routine a letter is probably not necessary at all: a form would do better. The reader would prefer it too, not to scan a letter for the one thing he wants to know.

But suppose the information is not routine. A letter is needed. What is a letter? A letter is an attempt to persuade someone at a distance, through the medium of words on paper, to do something for you. Can you afford then to take chances with the result? If every word in the letter does not do its own selling job, then you have diminished by just that much the likelihood of the reader doing what you want. His eye must not miss any of your words: each one is calculated to persuade.

This then is the first big idea to be realized in stimulating interest in better letters: that every letter is an important selling agent which anyone who speaks passable English can not write. That, indeed, even our best speakers

1. R.H.Morris "New Trend in Correspondence -Streamline, Humanize, Dramatize" Office Management & Equipment Feb.1946.



are among our poorest dictators, insofar as they use useless and unnecessary words in a rubber-stamp style.

LETTERS ARE NOT CHEAPER - We have all worked in offices where a telephone call outside the city needed an executive's permission: to send a wire of any kind meant going through channels too. The first objection sometimes voiced, sometimes implicit in the way our argument was heard for these expensive media always was, "Wouldn't a letter do?" Because a letter, after all, only took a 3 cent stamp: a call out of town or a wire would cost 10 to 20 times as much.

But would it? As a matter of fact, it wouldn't. In many offices, strange as it may seem, it would be cheaper to phone or wire. Indeed in almost any office without intelligent control of correspondence, if two letters are needed to settle an affair, it will always be cheaper to make a phone call even to a distant city. This sounds incredible, but later on we shall marshal facts to support the statement.

The truth is that letters are really expensive. It is not well known at all that every time an ordinary letter leaves an office somewhere around 50 cents have been spent. And this is the second key to stimulate interest.

Using these two key facts as touchstones - better letters are necessary and every letter is expensive - it is easy to stimulate interest in better letters. This interest, showing itself as an active desire to write more effectively, must be aroused and maintained if a program of control is to work.



## 2. TRAINING OF DICTATORS AND STENOGRAPHERS

The importance of this second element in correspondence control can hardly be overemphasized. Especially since the training program flows directly out of the two key facts whereby interest was stimulated. "How", will ask the staff, "can we write better letters? How can we do it less expensively?"

The training must be formalized to some degree, depending on the needs of the company.<sup>1</sup> It will include formal instruction either in the company classroom (or some place set aside as such) or in some standard course outside the company. It will include regularly scheduled conferences for dictators particularly, to refresh the memory, maintain the interest and correct the most common faults that persist.

The training program may include talks by experts from the outside, to get a fresh point of view. It certainly will include a dictator's manual of standard practice, and a stenographer's manual. It will include regular bulletins from the training officer throughout the year to drive home the basic principles of better letters.

Why is such formal training stressed? For several reasons. First of all, from the moment interest is developed

1. See George B. Hotchkiss, Edward Kilduff, J. Harold Janis, Advanced Business Correspondence, Harper's New York 1947 Page 493.



in better letters, from that same moment a set of company standards begins to evolve. A better letter for that company is defined: It will be concise not curt, the tone will be invariably courteous, the format will be fixed, and so on. Indeed, the moment the correspondence undergoes analysis many letters will be found unnecessary: forms would do a better, less costly job.

Now meeting these standards of a better letter is not easy. Many dictators will be breaking the habits of a lifetime. <sup>1</sup> Many stenos and typists, grown careless through 'superiors' tolerance, will learn of standards for the first time. The informal breaking-in of the new person by the veteran employee is not enough, for example, to show how to write a concise friendly letter. Nor is the notification to old employees that 'better letters according to this form will now be used' enough either. If they are not now writing better letters there are undoubtedly bad habits to overcome. And a systematic presentation - the essence of formal training - is required to overcome them.

Another reason for formal training is the temptation to backslide. <sup>2</sup> The training cannot end once the personnel are at their job. It must be a continuous process re-

1. "Bad habits are the root of correspondence problems" says Hiram Rasely, Office Management - A Handbook, editor Coleman Maze, N.Y. Ronald Press 1947, Page 572.
2. Charles Riker speaks of the 'Difficulty in getting his correspondents to absorb a new idea', "Promoting Better Letters" Executive Service Bulletin, published by Met. Life Insurance Co. Feb. 1945 Page 4.



minding how to achieve better letters. Group conference, manuals, bulletins help to do this.

### 3. SUPERVISION

Supervision is the third element in the program. Its need is evident wherever standards are set up. Just as in the factory where quality workmanship is expected and less than that is rejected, so in a better letter program the product must be compared to a standard, and accepted or rejected.

This supervision must be directed not only to the typists' work but to the dictators'. The appearance of a letter is important. Rigid inspection of typists' work is fairly common.<sup>1</sup> But the far more important aspect of better letters, the quality of the expression, is seldom checked.

Supervising the dictator's work of course is touchy. It calls for enormous tact and common sense, because quite often there is no objective yardstick against which to measure a better letter. It is easy to say to the typist, "this letter is not placed accurately." Or, "the right margin is ragged." It is self-evident. But whether a letter fails in tone, or is too stilted, or wordy - here judgment comes in. And the supervisor must not only know his principles inside out, but he must be a first class psychologist.

1. For example, Sears Roebuck checks every letter leaving correspondence dept. Interview with Miss M. Mulligan, assistant to the General Manager, Boston store, December 31, 1947.



This third element, if neglected, can ruin the well-planned program. Stimulating interest in the better-letter campaign and training the personnel, by themselves will never sustain a continuing program. Constant supervision of the dictator as well as the typist must be maintained.

#### 4. SYSTEMATIZATION

The fourth element is the system underlying the handling of correspondence. Of all the elements in correspondence control it will probably be the most difficult to achieve. What is meant by systematization? To systematize correspondence means to coordinate the steps entailed in producing a letter in the simplest and cheapest way. These steps include origination, transportation, production, review, shipping.

The main difficulty in setting up any new system is the interference with the established way of doing things. Yet once the analyst has begun to consider critically a company's correspondence, improvements will suggest themselves, many operations will be found unnecessary, expensive ways of doing jobs will beg for correction. But discretion calls for a slow change. Here we must expect vigorous reaction - we are dealing with the human element. Every change must be planned, budgeted, tested.

1. Allan Mogensen speaks rather bluntly of work simplification: "There must be complete mental revolution on the part of everybody in the organization, and it is a hell of a lot harder to get mental revolution up at the top than it is down the line." "Work Simplification in the Office," NOMA PROCEEDINGS 1946 Page 36.



Let us just follow a letter briefly through the steps of its production noting at each step some question which may well be asked, the answer to which would mean a major change in procedure.

The letter originates with the dictator. Certain file material is needed. Is the material convenient? Would it be better to move the files from where they are: or perhaps to move the dictator nearer the files? Would it be sound to have all letters answered from one place or dictating bureau, - near the files? Are centralized or decentralized files more efficient?

This is only one aspect of dictating a letter: yet note how anyone of these questions could cause a major change in operation of the office.

The dictation must be carried to the typist. If dictated to a steno who then becomes the typist, would it be more efficient to have a dictating machine? If dictated to a machine is messenger service adequate? How about mechanical transportation - dumbwaiters, air tubes?

The letter is produced. If typed from shorthand notes, would a central transcription department be more efficient, less expensive? If typed in such a department, how about an incentive plan?

The letter is reviewed. How rigid is the inspection? How about checking for quality of dictation? Would



central dictating bureau make such review easier? How about signing letters - could clerk do it?

The letter is shipped. Is routine simple? Would a postage meter save money?

These are only a few of the questions which will arise as analysis of correspondence proceeds. Obviously the solution to these questions will be easier to get than will any change based on the solution. Take the experience at Dennison Mfg. Co. some years ago. <sup>1</sup> The office manager sought a time study of his transcription department with the idea of testing an incentive plan. At that time this was a revolutionary notion. It took years before he could get the necessary cooperation to make the study, and as it turned out, install the plan.

#### B. WHO LEADS THE PROGRAM

In the Letter-writing Manual of the Lincoln National Life Insurance Co. we read: <sup>2</sup>

"Letter writing may be aptly termed the most powerful and influential medium in modern commerce."

And in a talk given to a group of company correspondents by one of the leading authorities on better letters,

1. Interview with Paul McBride, Office Service Manager, Framingham, Mass. October 1947
2. Introduction, Page 4



1

we hear:

"Any company which writes better letters has a competitive advantage over one which doesn't. Letters are the daily messengers of business. They are its lifeblood."

Strong words, these. Who is the man then, to administer this "most influential medium:" who should be called to preserve and strengthen the "lifeblood" of a company?

Evidently it must be no ordinary man. Various authorities agree on the specifications to be laid down in selecting the correspondence executive. Hotchkiss states them generally but completely - he must know correspondence inside out, be a good teacher, be a good manager. <sup>2</sup> These three qualities are expanded by J. H. Pickens in the Business Correspondence Handbook: <sup>3</sup>

The correspondence executive must have:

1. Ability to write letters, judge letters, handle correspondence department efficiently.
2. Experience in all phases of letter-writing theory and practice.
3. Tact to win cooperation among the company's departments.
4. Patience with correspondents & others.
5. Enthusiasm - necessary to develop interest.
6. Thoroughness - attention to detail.

1. Hiram N. Rasely, Analysis of Correspondence, Veeder Root Co. Hartford, Conn. Unpublished material.
2. Hotchkiss, Kilduff, Janis, Advanced Business Correspondence New York Harper's, 1947 Page 485.
3. Chicago, A. W. Shaw Co. 1926, as reported in Centralized Correspondence Departments, New York, Policy holders Service Bureau, 1930, Page 3, published by Met. Life. Insurance Co.



Charles Nieman defines a correspondence coordinator  
 who <sup>1</sup>

1. Has appreciation of correspondence clerical details.
2. Has the "you" attitude.
3. Knows big things are only sum of details.
4. Will circulate through organization to see who, as well as what, is stalling the system.
5. Has knack for shortcuts.
6. Realizes he is always "treading on toes."
7. Welcomes criticisms, suggestions from all. .
8. Remembers human relations.

That such a man is not easy to find is pointed up in the following comparison. A short time ago I interviewed the assistant to the president of a fairly large company. The company is the outstanding one of its kind in New England; nation-wide it is one of the leaders in its industry. Yet my informant describes his own office as follows: <sup>2</sup>

"It is common practice here for correspondents to dictate a letter to a steno. The letter is transcribed corrected, rewritten, corrected, rewritten. The corrections include errors of typists - the average girl never learns! - and the errors and additions of dictators.

"In the sales department (he continued) the four salesmen conduct a great deal of correspondence over each contract before it is closed. A contract is always different and should be dictated: but they cannot dictate....they scribble handwritten instructions. Having no plan, the work takes several doings over."

1. "Warizing Correspondence and its Management, Washington, U. S. Civil Service Commission 1942 Page 16-17.
2. This company obviously cannot be identified. The conversation is not quoted, but the spirit is exact.



I asked if dictating machines were available.

"Yes" he said, "but there is no supervisor to insist they use them, even if they were trained to use them, which they are not. There is no one around to organize the situation - no one knows how."

Against this experience lay the statement of the vice-president of a large firm in speaking of his correspondence supervisor: <sup>1</sup>

"Disunified correspondence methods were making enemies for our firm faster than we could make friends. For example, our sales department would send a master sales letter to a firm. Three days later, the same firm would get a collection letter from us.

"Heaven only knows what our customers thought. All that has been changed, however, since we got our correspondence man.

"He's just about the last person I'd let go from this company."

Where is the man to be found then to lead a program of correspondence control? There are three sources to be investigated. Each has its advantages and disadvantages: doubtless some compromise must be made by any company seeking a correspondence supervisor. These three sources are: <sup>2</sup>

1. Centralized Correspondence Depts. New York, Policyholders Service Bureau, published by Met. Life Insurance Co. 1930 Page 5. This is not quoted, but the spirit is exact.
2. Hotchkiss, Kilduff, Janis, Advanced Business Correspondence, New York Harper's 1947, Page 485.



1. From within the company
2. From outside the company
3. A Correspondence Consultant.

Finding the right man within the company is probably the easiest way to get a correspondence coordinator: and in many respects it is the best way. Such a man would have the necessary knowledge of company policies, aims and customers. It is presumed he has the necessary experience in expressing these aims and policies on paper. Added to that is the more ready acceptance of an insider by the staff: he will not have to sell himself quite so hard, at first, as a newcomer.

The big disadvantages - which are far from insuperable, of course - are these: he may not have enough specific knowledge of the problems of correspondence control, and secondly, company politics may entangle him. This second is the greater liability, as we all know who have observed offices in operation.

Hiring a trained person from the outside to fill the job has definite advantages. It is more possible to fill the theoretical specifications with a man who knows correspondence problems, who can teach them, who can manage such a program. And in the beginning he will be outside company politics. But against him are these considerations: he may not be accepted by the staff, he does not know company policy. Again, these points may not be important in a given situation.

Most companies who have correspondence control find



their man within the company. Indeed it is usually he who made the company conscious of its letters and the possibility for improvement or savings. This has been true in several of the companies I visited, for example, Dennison's in Framingham where the Office Service Manager heads up the program: and Hood Rubber Co. in Watertown.<sup>1</sup> It is also true in American Optical Co. in Southbridge, Mass. where Lester Brigham, Office Service Manager has gained an enviable reputation for progressiveness.

The third source of a correspondence coordinator is the expert consultant. The reason why some firms prefer this source is to take advantage of his broad experience in other companies. The proper measures can be suggested with less chance of error, and installed without fear or favor.

Firms like Veeder-Root of Hartford and Nashua Gummed & Coated Paper Co. of New Hampshire have called on the Better Letters Institute of Boston with good results. They have found their staffs respond well to the prestige of the outside authority. He can call a spade a spade and have the staff accept it.

The general procedure of the outside consultant is briefly as follows: <sup>2</sup>

1. Interview with Arthur Porter, Office Service Manager, Watertown, November 8, 1947.
2. Based on interviews with staff of the Institute during December 1947, and the Veeder-Root Co. Analysis of Correspondence by Mr. Rasely unpublished.



1. An introductory talk on the importance of better letters to the entire staff of dictators, and many times secretaries and stenos.
2. Analysis of company correspondence
3. Series of talks to staff outlining main faults: improvement suggestions
4. Complete report to top executive of results of analysis plus recommendations.
5. Preparation of manuals with standards.
6. Setting up a committee to carry out recommendations after special training.
7. Follow-up at regular intervals.

The disadvantages of the outside consultant of course are obvious. He can point out where improvement is necessary, make recommendations to set up a workable system. But, unless the executive who called him in is willing or able to follow through with the program, the good work started can fall through for lack of motivation. Good habits come hard.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE CORRESPONDENCE AUDIT

Underlying the program for correspondence control is the detailed analysis of the company's correspondence. From this audit will be shown the weight and emphasis due each of the four elements. It is the first step in the derivation of company standards.

The audit will follow two main avenues:

1. A cost analysis of the company's letters to find how much a letter costs.
2. A detailed study of carbons from the company's files.

The facts disclosed by this audit will indicate where interest must be stimulated; it will show the scope and direction of the training program. The questions of machine-dictation, centralization of production, incentive plans, shortcuts will all find the beginnings of solution here.

#### A. COST - DETERMINING FORMULAE

##### 1. THE RASELY FORMULA

Hiram N. Rasely, of the Better Letters Institute of Boston, has used the following formula successfully in computing the cost of a business letter:

##### 1. DIRECT COSTS

Salaries

Dictator's time - cost per

1. OFFICE MANAGEMENT - A HANDBOOK, editor Coleman Maze, N. Y. Ronald Press, 1947 Page 568.



letter...Steno's time - cost  
per letter...File clerks, mail  
boys, messenger's time...

#### Stationery

Letterheads  
Envelopes  
Carbon paper  
Carbon copies for file

#### Equipment and miscellaneous supplies

Typewriters  
Ribbons for typewriters  
Current-dictation, transcription,  
shaving  
Dictation machine & cylinders  
Furniture  
Special office and mailing  
appliances.....such as scales,  
sealing machine, etc.

#### Stamps

Direct postage cost  
Stamp affixing machine cost

#### Waste

Spoiled stationery  
Loss of stamps  
Returned mail

## 2. OVERHEAD OR INDIRECT COSTS

#### Indirect Expenses

Rent  
Light  
Fuel  
Taxes  
Insurance

## 2. THE AURNER SIMPLIFIED FORM

Professor Robert R. Aurner gives a simplified form  
to determine the average letter - production cost of an entire  
company with many dictators on its staff: <sup>1</sup>

1. How many dictators does the company have?
2. What is the salary of each?

1. Effective Business Correspondence Cincinnati, Southwestern  
Publishing Co. 1939 Page 329.



3. Estimate the probable rate of dictation for each dictator.
4. Using the table of letter costs (see over) and making due allowance for slower dictation than 10 letters an hour, figure the cost of each dictator's time.
5. Add to this result the cost of the steno, stationery, postage and folding as indicated in the table of letter costs.
6. Take results for each dictator, add these results together, divide by number of entries in added column. Result will be the average cost of each letter.

Professor Aurner's letter cost table is based on two fixed items and one variable. The fixed items are the expense of stenographer - 13 cents per letter, and the expense of stationery, postage and folding - 5 cents. The variable item in the table is the dictator's salary - 10 letters per hour are taken as the dictator's average production.

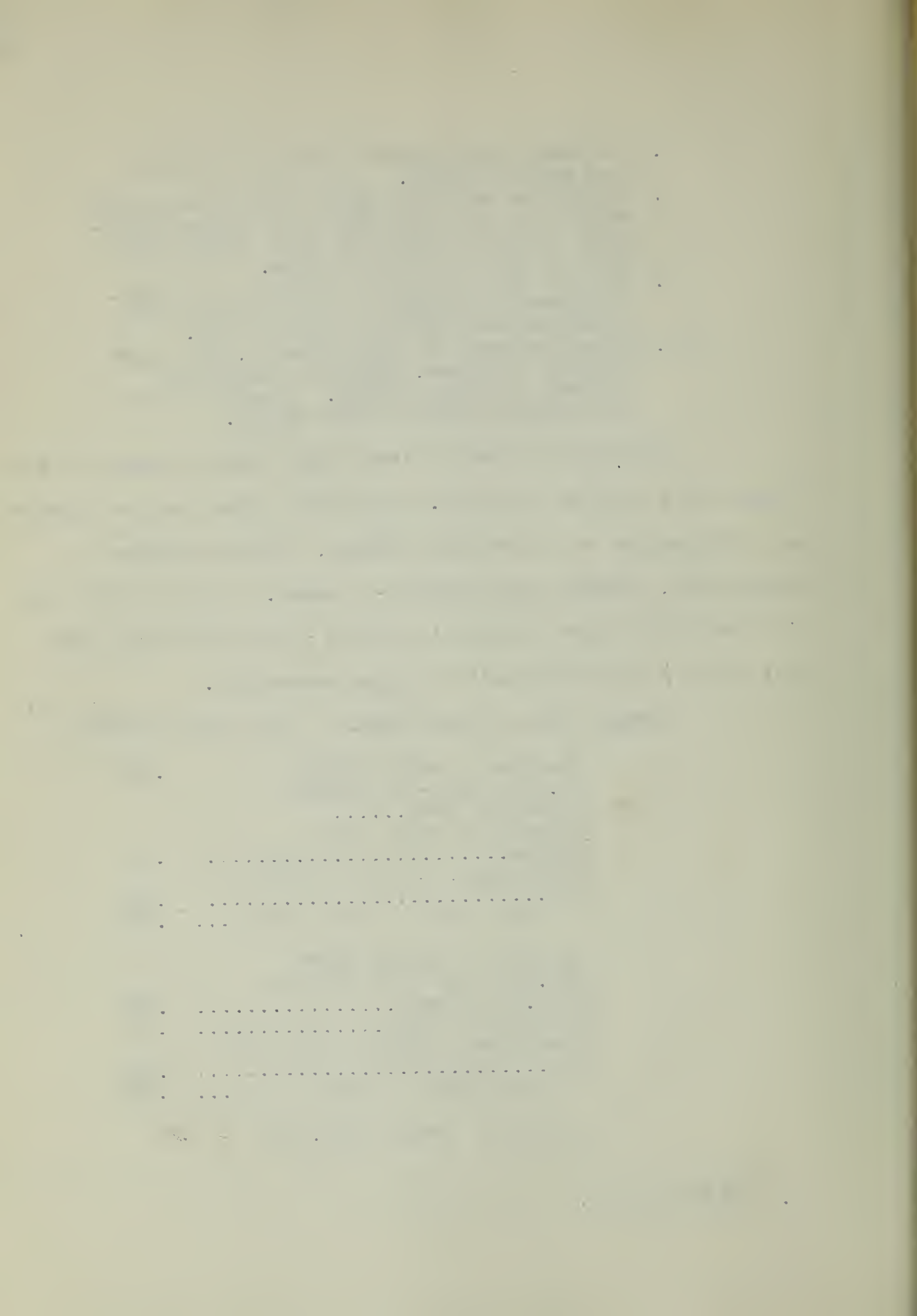
A short form of the letter - cost table follows:

1

Dictator: Salary \$2000	.083
\$6.67 a day - 10 letters	
@ 83¢ per hour.....	
Expense of steno for a	
letter.....	.13
Stationery, postage & fold-	
ing.....	.05
Total cost of each letter...	<u>.263</u>

Dictator: Salary \$5000	
\$16.67 a day - 10 letters	
@ \$2.08 an hour.....	.208
Expense of steno.....	.13
Stationery, postage and fold-	
ing.....	.05
Total cost of each letter...	<u>.388</u>

Dictator: Salary \$10,000



\$33.33 a day - 10 letters	
\$4.17 an hour.....	.416
Expense of steno.....	.130
Stationery, postage & folding.....	.050
Total cost of each letter..	.596

An illuminating footnote is added to this table. It points out that no allowance for office overhead expense - heat, light, etc. - is included. Further, "it is probable that the figures here are too low. Certainly they are conservative. Additional studies reveal a tendency for letter productions costs to increase from year to year."

### 3. HOW MUCH DOES A LETTER COST?

Several surveys have been conducted to learn how much a letter costs. Authorities on letter-writing have made estimates based on their experiences. A list of these figures gives a fairly narrow range.

- |                                                                      |           |   |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------|---|
| 1. Hiram Rasely found the average costs to run from.....             | .25 - .60 | 1 |
| 2. Professor Aurner estimates the average letter costs between ..... | .40 - .50 | 2 |
| 3. R. H. Morris, correspondence consultant, estimates.               | .60 - .70 | 3 |
| 4. D. W. Goodwin found upon analysis cost of his company's letters.. | .62       | 4 |

1. Office Management A Handbook, Editor Coleman Maze, N. Y. Ronald Press 1947, Page 567.
2. Effective Business Correspondence Cincinnati, Southwestern Publishing Co. 1939, Page 328.
3. "New Trend in Correspondence" Office Management & Equipment Feb. 1946.
4. "Better Letters Cost Less" Better Letters Association Proceedings 1918.



5.	Strathmore Paper Co. ordered a study by Ernst & Ernst. It indicated using dictator's salary of \$45.00 and steno's salary of \$20.....	.39	
6.	Edison Co. Survey.....	.42	
7.	Dictaphone Corp. Survey of letter costs.....	.43	
8.	Black Hawk Press Survey of letter costs.....	.56	1

There are several points to be noted in this schedule. Evidently the costs of a letter in any given company will tend to be high if we are to use the samples just recorded as criteria. All from different sources, they show a definite homogeneity. Hence, if we were to apply the average of these figures as a rough multiplier to the number of letters mailed from a company, the total cost of correspondence is seen to be well worth investigating.

The average of the recorded figures is 49  $\frac{1}{2}$  cents. Suppose we call it 50 cents for convenience. Now, in a small company producing 10 letters an hour let us see what the annual costs might be. In 8 hours a day, 5 days a week, 50 weeks a year, 20,000 letters a year will be the product of the letter-writing staff. At 50 cents a letter this is a \$10,000 per charge for letters.

This is a surprising figure. If we assume that it is possible in a good system to produce a letter for 25 cents,

1. The Strathmore, Edison, Dictaphone & Black Hawk figures are from Benjamin R. Haynes & Irol Whitmore, Mechanics of Business Letter Writing, Knoxville, Univ. of Tenn. 1942 P.6.



Mr. Rasely's lowest figure, this would mean that half of this \$10,000 is wasted. If we take the lower limit of dollars spent on correspondence yearly in the country as mentioned in our introduction,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  billion dollars, the reasoning prompts the incredible conclusion that more than 1 billion dollars is wasted annually.

Considered on a daily basis, over 8 million dollars is spent every day on business letters. If every 25 of every 50 cents could be saved by better letters and a measure of control, above 4 million dollars a day could be siphoned from overhead and put to more productive use. Obviously, then, to turn such of this overhead as is unnecessary to more economic use, would benefit the nation's business as well as each company that leads the way.

#### B. ANALYSIS OF CARBONS

For his study of the company's letters, the analyst will want a representative sample from all the departments, and from each dictator within a department. That means the number of letters analyzed will depend on the size of the company, and the amount of its dictation. As a matter of fact, comparatively few letters are necessary to draw an accurate picture of the correspondence as a whole.<sup>1</sup> But in order to classify each department and dictator it is best to include a complete sampling.

1. Rasely in the analysis for Veeder Root Co. Hartford, Conn. found that 43 letters were sufficient. Analysis of Correspondence, unpublished.



Three aspects will generally be considered in the analysis of carbons: repetition, content and form. Under repetition, the analyst asks, "Are all these letters necessary?" Content covers the manner of expression. Form checks the quality of the transcription affecting the appearance of the letter.

# 1. REPETITION

The experience of the LeCourtenay Co. Manufacturers of Centrifugal Pumps in Neward, N. J. illustrates the value of analysis for duplication of effort.<sup>1</sup> It was found in this company that 75 percent of the letters came from four divisions, and were largely repetitive.

The divisions and the general types of letters were:

<u>DIVISION</u>	<u>TYPE OF LETTER</u>
Sales.....	Quotations on repair parts on new equipment Unable to quote Miscellaneous
Order Service.....	Notification of shipping date Answer to request for date Postponement of shipping date Miscellaneous
Purchasing.....	Request for bids Request for shipping date Return of incorrect invoice Miscellaneous
Accounting.....	Collection letters Credit inquiries General

1. "How to Reduce Dictating Time" American Business June 1944



LeCourtenay's solution to this duplication of effort would not completely fit each company. But the idea is certainly worth adapting to specific needs. It lay in the development of "model" letters for the typist to copy, with a fill-in of the pertinent information as indicated in longhand by the dictator. Additional paragraphs if needed were added in longhand.

Models were developed for each division and only those pertinent to the dictators division were included in the "model" booklet supplied him. Surprisingly few specimens were necessary to cover a large part of the correspondence: for example, in the Sales Division model booklet only 5 specimens were needed. <sup>1</sup>

This device applied to fully 75% of the letters being sent out, or 3 of every 4. For most of the remaining quarter it was possible to develop form paragraphs applicable to each division. Now the dictator need only jot down a series of code numbers, which the typist translates into a form letter which isn't a form letter!

The few letters left which could not be handled by either of these two devices but needed dictation, were confined to the late afternoon for next morning's transcription.

The implications of this plan we shall discuss later.

1. For examples, see last chapter on Form Letters & Paragraphs.



It is sufficient to say now, that due to analysis of the correspondence, it was found possible to prevent repetition. The value of the procedure is indicated by the saving of time: it now takes one hour of combined dictator-typist time to do two hours work by the orthodox method.

## 2. CONTENT

That part of the analyst's job which will bear the richest fruit in better letters, is the study of the content of the company letters. It is to the content of letters that Mr. Riker refers when he says: "Analysis is the basis of the whole letter improvement campaign."<sup>1</sup> Here is where he comes to grips with the worst enemies of better letters.

UNNECESSARY WORDS - In cutting out all the useless and unnecessary words and phrases which clog our modern correspondence machinery, the analyst will make his most spectacular showing. He has shown that a letter is an expensive commodity costing upwards of 50 cents and more - which is certainly bad news and probably unexpected by management. Then, to point out as the first finding of his carbon analysis that each letter is full of extra needless terms which cost a great deal of money, makes for a thought-provoking juxtaposition.

Is he likely to find unnecessary words? R.H. Morris' experience has been that 85% of all the letters he has analyzed

1. "Promoting Better Letters," Executives Service Bulletin published by Met. Life Insurance Co. Feb. 1945.



showed superfluous terms. <sup>1</sup> In fact, the average letter is from 20% to 60% longer than necessary.

Hiram N. Rasely, pioneer in the field of correspondence analysis gave me access to two of the analyses he made for large concerns. He found in the letters of the Nashua Gummed & Coated Paper Co. an average of 14.7 lines per letter, in analyzing 293 letters. <sup>2</sup> His comment:

"The dictated letters of the NG & CPGCo., with better dictation methods, can be reduced an average 4.7 lines per letter. Better dictation methods will also produce better letters, thus accomplishing two results:

1. Shorter or more concise letters.
2. Better reader impression.

An average reduction of 4.7 lines per letter would result in a saving of 31.9%."

He makes reference at this point to his experience at the Norton Co. in Worcester. There, as a result of what was probably the first analysis of correspondence, average lineage dropped from 16.5 to 11.2 in less than 6 months. Hence more effective letters were produced at a saving of over 33 1/3%.

In Mr. Rasely's report on a survey of letters for the Veeder-Root Co., Hartford, Conn. is this summary:

Number of letters reviewed.....43

1. "New Trend in Correspondence," Office Management & Equipment. Feb. 1946, Page 47.
2. Analysis of Correspondence of this company by Mr. Rasely, unpublished.



Number of words in original dictation.....5327

Average number of words per letter..... 123.8

Number of words used in revised dictation.....2398

Average number of words per letter, revised..... 55.7

Needless words used in original dictation.....2929

Average number needless words per letter..... 68.1

In revising these letters Mr. Rasely<sup>1</sup> merely made an effort to rid them of words which added nothing to the effect, in fact detracted from it. Here are just a few examples taken from the Veeder-Root report:

<u>As Dictated</u>	<u>Revised</u>
We therefore wish to inform you that if you have any reason.....	If you have any reason.....
We are enclosing herewith....	We enclose
We are putting through a change to our factory to hold up.....	We are holding up..
We take this opportunity to thank you for your courtesy to.....	Thank you for your courtesy to.....

The list could be continued indefinitely from just these two reports. If there is one thing that all letter-writing authorities agree on, it is that modern business correspondence is loaded to the gunwales with such circumlocu-

1. These data are from Analysis of Correspondence of Veeder Root Co. Unpublished.



tions, unnecessary to the meaning and ruinous to the effect.

DEAD DICTION - The analyst will look for - and probably find - many examples of stereotyped, hackneyed, "bewhiskered" - as "Cy" Frailey calls them - expressions. They are the rubber stamped phrases, weak and worn and weary, which make the letter too expensive because ineffectual.

1

Robert Aurner in Effective Business Correspondence quotes a letter made up of just such phrases, then

"..we have just heard the dictating of a letter that, if it were not so typical of many still being dictated today, would seem a horrible travesty on modern correspondence."

2

Mr. Rasely in Better Letters speaks of the "persistence with which dictators cling to the letter jargon of a decade ago."

3

H. A. Way in Modern Letter Writing advises dictators to be human, to throw away their rubber stamps.

There is no doubt of the prevalence of dead diction in today's correspondence. Barnacles clustered on a ship's hull hold it back. It drags. This dead diction is a thick layer of barnacles on the hull of modern correspondence.

Just this week a member of my household received a letter from a rail-road executive. He started the second para-

1. Cincinnati, Southwestern Publishing Co. 1939, Page 289
2. Boston, Better Letters Institute, 1947, Page 39, Booklet 2
3. New York, Royal Typewriting Co. 30 Page booklet, undated.



graph:

'I take pleasure in forwarding herewith'.....

That is a barnacle. It would be possible to fill the next ten pages with other examples. Let us, however limit ourselves to a short list of the commonest samples: <sup>1</sup>

According to our records..	Esteemed favor
Advise	Hand you herewith
As per	In reply we wish to
At an early date	advise
At hand	Please be advised
Beg to inform or advise	Thanking you in ad-
Beg to acknowledge	vance
Contents carefully noted	Trusting this is
Enclosing herewith	satisfactory
Enclosed please find	Wish to advise

We remain, & oblige.....

That these vestiges of a more formal day rob present day letters of force and strength goes without saying. They are a lazy way of dictating. The letter composed of them is wasted. They are an expensive luxury which the analyst will make every effort to eradicate.

L. E. Frailey quotes this example of a reductio ad absurdum: <sup>2</sup>

Sing to the tune of Old Oaken Bucket:

The old business phrases  
The custom-bound phrases,  
The moth-eaten phrases,  
To which we all cling -  
The hackneyed expressions  
The formal expressions  
The icy impressions,  
To thee do we sing.

1. Robert R. Aurner, Effective Business Correspondence, Cin. Southwestern Publishing Co. 1939, Page 290
2. Smooth Sailing Letters, New York, Prentice Hall 1938, Page 5



UNPLANNED LETTERS - Too many letters, due to poor dictating habits, will evidence lack of planning. The symptoms include incomplete information, confusing presentation, too long sentences and paragraphs, a slow start.

Here is the first paragraph of a letter studied by Mr. Rasely in the Veeder-Root survey: <sup>1</sup>

"With reference to the visit of our Mr. Soderquist on December 31, regarding your interest in counters of our manufacture for counting boxes of eggs put up with 12 eggs to a box, we have entered an order on our factory for 5 Standard Small Reset Counters to be equipped with thumb lever and 5 combined counters with 3 figures in the reset section and 5 figures in the totalizing section."

Notice how difficult it is to get a clear meaning from the first reading. There is a confusion of two ideas within the one paragraph - indeed the one sentence. The start is slow, not calculated to catch active interest immediately. The paragraph is entirely too long.

The above is an example from an unplanned, unclear letter. Henry H. Morse <sup>2</sup> speaks of letters that are puzzles to the reader. His estimate is that only 50% of letters are good letters putting over their ideas well. The reasons he advances for such a large number of poor letters include:

1. Analysis of Correspondence of this Company, unpublished.
2. Vice President of Florence Stove Co. Gardner, Mass. in "Communications in Business," feature of American Business Feb. 1944.



1. Undefined thought to begin with, evidenced in wandering of thought, and shifting of position.
2. Interruptions...Preoccupations with more absorbing work put aside while dictating.
3. Laziness in finding right word or phrase.

In Montgomery Ward's Bulletin <sup>1</sup> Better Letters, Mr. F. H. Ray, Correspondence Supervisor, writes of the correspondent who answered a letter incompletely, "the whole story is that the correspondent didn't take the time nor enough interest in the customer's problem to write a complete letter." Evidently, here in a company with a well-organized system of control, there are still unplanned letters. How much more likely it is in the company without correspondence control!

"Between 10% and 14% of letters written in most offices would be unnecessary if the first letter were explicit," says R. H. Morris. <sup>2</sup> The analyst, then, according to this evidence will find a wide field for investigation here. It will indicate above all else to him where he must train his dictators to produce better letters.

TONE - "You will catch more flies with molasses than vinegar" was a favorite with A. Lincoln. It should be a favorite with every dictator, too. There is an awful finality in the

1. Bulletin 94; these bulletins, issued 'occasionally' bound Jan. 1948, unpublished.
2. "New Trend in Correspondence" Office Management & Equipment....Feb. 1946, Page 47.



written word, sealed and mailed. It cannot be recalled any more than the 'moving finger' of Omar Khayyam. Face to face, a sharp word can be softened with a smile, a lifted eyebrow. In a letter, a sharp word cuts.

Is tone so vital to effective correspondence that our analyst must watch carefully for it? All the leading authorities believe so. They decry its abuse particularly in adjustment and credit letters, where the action to be won from a reader often demands persuasion of the highest order. Yet despite the well-known hypersensitivity of the human animal, all too many times, instead of friendly personable persuasion, is found harshness, brusqueness, insincerity, sarcasm, a chilling impersonality.

The general run of correspondence will likely be free of the chilling effects of poor tone, because for the most part routine situations enkindle no fire. Hence in the analyses by Mr. Rasely mentioned above, we find him complimenting the dictators for the generally good tone. <sup>1</sup>

But in the occasional letter dealing with the difficult situation, - when all the selling ability of the dictator should be focussed on getting a favorable answer, then we are likely to find impatience, curtness, lack of warmth.

1. Analyses of Correspondence of Nashua Gummed & Coated Paper Co. & Veeder Root Co. Hartford, Conn. unpublished material.



Thus in Montgomery Ward's Bulletin's we find the exhortation to sales correspondents to remember that customers will be in the driver's seat again when goods are more numerous. <sup>1</sup> M-W's dictators must build good-will against that day.

Samples from another company's collection letters will illustrate where poor tone has been allowed to creep in. <sup>2</sup> At just the hint of impatience, or the suggestion of sarcasm, good-will and favorable action are lost. The reader's back goes up, and the letter's chances of achieving its goal go down.

Notice the chilling effect of these phrases culled at random from the series of collection letters of this large (and eminently successful!) firm:

Otherwise, I expect that you will send  
the additional amount by return mail.  
(brusque)

Then, for no apparent reason, you failed..  
(impertinent)

We are justified in demanding immediately payment of what is rightfully  
due us. (self-righteous)

You cannot afford to neglect.....  
(negative)

To neglect a bill.....  
(curt)

1. Bulletin 91: bulletins bound Jan. 1948 unpublished.
3. This company obviously cannot be identified. A complete analysis for readability of this company's collection letters appears later in this chapter.



Even in the last hopeless stages of the collection process such approaches do not justify themselves. If goodwill is the ever-present preoccupation of the correspondent, more than ever here, where a customer is on the verge of being lost, must he rally all his powers to save that customer.

Closely related to good tone is the "you" attitude in letter-writing. It is easily recognized. How well did the writer 'put himself in the reader's shoes'? This simple test will oftentimes discover the "we" attitude in which the writer looks only to his benefit, not to the reader's.

The "you" attitude is based on the simple fact of human nature, that we are likely to act only if we get something out of it. Stressing the advantage of the reader in acting favorably for us seems only common sense viewed in this light. Yet consider the following paragraphs from a series of promotion letters seeking new charge accounts:

"Knowing you to be one of our customers who have made it possible for us to attain the stature of New England's Largest Store, and now to commence our building program for a Greater.....'s we are taking the liberty of writing to you and inviting you to open a charge account with us."

That is from one of the letters. In another we find:

"The Greater.....'s, with its newly enlarged departments and more available and wider varieties of stocks, plus its emphasis on the real spirit



of the old fashioned Christmas, invites you to visit us as we approach the Holiday season.

"Knowing you to be one of our valued customers, our services, merchandise and attractions should warrant a visit or a shopping tour. It is only fitting that we, at this time, write you to offer the convenience of a charge account with New England's largest Store....."

The dictator's cue was clear here. "If I were Mrs. Jones," he would ask himself, "why would I want a charge account here?" And answering that from Mrs. Jones' point of view would have produced a warm, friendly letter far removed from the obsession of 'New England's Largest Store' condescending to offer her a convenience.

READABILITY - This is the sum total of all the elements which make a better letter. It may be defined as that quality which determines the ease of understanding the letter. How quickly will the reader catch its meaning? There has recently been developed an objective measure of readability which offers the analyst an opportunity to check his findings.<sup>1</sup> He will have reached a definite judgment on the effectiveness of the letters analyzed for unnecessary words, too long sentences, dead diction, lack of planning, poor tone. With this objective measure-the Flesch Scale of Readability - he can check himself.<sup>2</sup>

1. Rudolph Flesch, The Art of Plain Talk, New York Harper's 1946.
2. The following is based on the description of the Flesch Scale in "How Does Your Writing Read" an 11 page pamphlet issued by U. S. Civil Service Commission, Washington 1946.



The formula is based on three factors. These are the length of sentences, the number of syllables per word and the number of personal references. The process is easy. Take a representative sample of the material being studied, count the number of words in each sentence. Compute the average words per sentence. Then count the affixes - the prefixes and suffixes added to a root - in every hundred words. A sample of affixes would be the pro-and-ure in the word 'procedure', around the root 'cede'.

The final step is to compute the number of personal references per hundred words. Personal references include all references to human beings or human relationships: personal pronouns - I, you, he, she, we (although not the 'we' used to designate a company): names of people, v.g. 'Mr. Smith of the Accounting Dept.': words like brother, mother, sister, aunt.

These three factors - number of words per sentence, number of affixes per 100 words, number of personal references per 100 words - are then weighted and the resultant compared to the scale that follows:

### THE FLESCH SCALE OF READABILITY

#### A. MEASURE OF READING DIFFICULTY

<u>Very Difficult</u> - level of scientific and professional journals. Comfortable reading for no one.	6
Requires professional training to understand.....	up
<u>Difficult</u> - level of scholarly magazine.	5
Comfortable reading for few.....	to
	6



<u>Fairly Difficult</u> - level of literary magazine	4
v.g. Atlantic Monthly. Comfortable reading for persons with some professional training.....	to 5
Standard - Reader's Digest, Time etc.	3
Comfortable reading, high school grad.....	to 4
<u>Fairly Easy</u> - Saturday Evening Post, Ladies Home Journal. Comfortable reading for people with some high school.....	2 to 3
Easy - Pulp magazines - Comfortable reading, grade school graduates.....	1 to 2
<u>Very Easy</u> - Level of comics - Comfortable for any literate.....	up to 1

I obtained a series of 46 collections letters used by a large retailing firm to collect budget instalment accounts. <sup>1</sup> I applied the Flesch formula to learn the "readability" of the series. "Would the average budget customer", I asked myself, "get the point immediately in each letter and act on it?"

Analysis placed this series of collection letters at 4.08, slightly higher in reading difficulty than standard, and on a level with a literary magazine. This showing was caused by sentences running as high as 54 words: words which ran into several syllables: and not enough personal references (although this was best factor) to overcome the first two.

I believe this series should have had a score between 1 and 3 or Easy to Fairly Easy. Why would this 'ease of

1. Obviously, I cannot identify this firm.



comprehension' or readability be especially important in such a series? There are two reasons:

1. A collection letter is in one sense, a Sales Letter: the customer is being persuaded to act favorable for you ( by paying you money). Unless the reason for so acting is crystal clear to him; unless the action he must take based on this reason, is definite and compelling, then he just won't 'buy'. Look at any good sales copy: see how it is slanted toward the reader's interest with brisk, live, incisive words. The reader cannot escape the meaning.
2. The second reason for readability is the market. Classifying the average budget customer in literacy might be a difficult job. Based on my own experience over a period of five years collecting from low-income instalments buyers, the average budgeteer would have less than four years of high school, would not read many books per year, would read only popular magazines where no strain would be put on his comprehension. Hence it follows that it would be better to err on the side of simplicity.

TABLE NO. 1

ANALYSIS OF A SERIES OF COLLECTION LETTERS

1

9 letters of 46 chosen at random as a representative sample.

LETTER NO.	NO WORDS IN LETTER	NO SEN-TENCES	AVER. WORDS PER SEN.	NO AF-FIXES PER LETTER	AVER. AFF. PER /100	PERS. REFS. PER LETTER	PERS. REF. PER 100
1	82	5	16	34	41	5	6
2	73	4	18	39	53	4	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
3	128	7	18	33	26	15	12 $\frac{1}{2}$
4	113	6	19	50	45	10	9
5	163	7	23	67	41	7	4
6	57	3	19	31	54	4	7
7	152	9	17	51	34	17	11
8	172	8	22	57	33	13	7 $\frac{1}{2}$
9	174	7	25	93	53	10	5 $\frac{1}{2}$
TOTAL	1114	56	20	455	41	85	7 $\frac{1}{2}$

1. Used to collect instalment accounts by a large retailer known nationally.



Weighting Formula

20 words per sentence	X	.1338	=	2.68
41 affixes per 100 words	X	.0645	=	<u>2.64</u>
Total.....				5.32
7 $\frac{1}{2}$ Personal References per 100 words	X	.0659	-	<u>.49</u>
Difference.....				4.83
Standard Adjustment Figure			-	<u>.75</u>
Score of series.....				4.08

In Smooth Sailing Letters Mr. Frailey has selected 50 Outstanding Letters "because they are natural, human and friendly." <sup>1</sup> He says the language of these letters is "marked with the distinction of ease and simplicity." Therefore, I was led to apply the same formula to the collection letters included in this group.

I counted the words in successive letters until I had about the same number of words as the first series analyzed, in order to make a fair comparison. According to the Flesch Test of Readability the series of 46 letters had failed in effectiveness, being too difficult to comprehend by the class of readers to which they were sent. How would the Frailey selections stack up against the same standard? Would their 'ease and simplicity' shine through even an objective measure?

Here is the analysis:

1. L. E. Frailey, Smooth Sailing Letters, New York, Prentice Hall, 1938 Page 103.



TABLE NO 11

ANALYSIS OF OUTSTANDING COLLECTION LETTERS

Random selection from 50 Outstanding Letters printed  
in Smooth Sailing Letters, by L. E. Frailey.

<u>LETTER NO.</u> -----	<u>NO. WORDS IN LETTER</u> -----	<u>NO. SEN- TENCES</u>	<u>AVER. WORDS PER SENTENCE</u>	<u>NO AFFIXES PER LETTER</u>	<u>AVER. PERS. AFF. REF. PER /100 LETTER</u>	<u>PERS. REF. PER L.</u>
1	287	19	15	81	28	37
2	123	6	21	42	34	4
3	134	11	12	34	25	24
4	26	2	13	1	4	5
5	101	7	14	32	32	10
6	191	12	16	63	33	12
7	264	18	15	71	27	32
Total	1126	75	15	324	29	124

Weighting Formula

15 words per sentence	X	.1338	= 2.01
29 affixes per 100 words	X	.0645	= 1.87
Total.....			3.88
11 Personal References per 100 words	X	.0659	- .73
Difference.....			3.15
Standard Adjustment Figure.....			- .75
Score for series.....			2.40

These letters fall into the Fairly Easy part of the scale, comfortable reading for people with some high school education. They really have 'ease and simplicity', then, not merely in the opinion of the skilled judge of letters, but against an objective yardstick of readability.



For comparison, I have included one letter from each series. The first letter is from the 46 collection letters of the large firm (9th letter in Table No. 1)

Dear.....:

You were extended the privilege of purchasing merchandise on an easy payment contract because we had a great deal of faith in your ability, honesty and integrity.

We have not altered our good opinion of you in the least. However, you have allowed your account to become seriously delinquent and as you are making no apparent effort to keep the transaction on an active basis, ARRANGEMENTS ARE BEING MADE TO REFER YOUR ACCOUNT TO OUR LOCAL REPRESENTATIVE WITH DEFINITE INSTRUCTIONS TO TAKE WHATEVER ACTION IS NECESSARY TO ARRANGE PROMPT PAYMENT.

Our interests are fully protected by a conditional contract. We dislike to even consider taking any action that will cause you any unnecessary trouble or embarrassment. Therefore, I am sending you this advance notice in order to give you an opportunity to make a substantial payment immediately and to plan definite arrangements regarding the manner in which you will take care of the balance.

Do THIS at once, and we shall be in a position to continue handling your account from this office.

Yours truly,

Compare a letter selected by Mr. Frailey, used by TIME Magazine to collect small balances. (2nd letter in Table No. 2) Notice the sly thrust at the customary solemnity of collection letters, in the first paragraph. The Author has dared to dip his pen in whimsy and even end with a pun. The letter cannot help but win a smile, and probably the cash, too.



Dear.....:

Our Accounting dept. does solemnly affirm, maintain and assert that you owe us two dollars and fifty cents.

We hate to get excited about two dollars and fifty cents. We also dislike the usual "collection letter" which bursts into tears in the first paragraph and yells for the law in the second.

Trouble is though, that you and 999 other subscribers all holding out two dollars and fifty cents, leave us \$2500 in the hole. It is this little problem in elementary arithmetic that shakes our faith in humanity.

So, (to quote from an esteemed contemporary) won't you "obey that impulse" and send us your check for two dollars and fifty cents. For in this case procrastination is certainly the thief of TIME.

Yours truly,



## CHAPTER IV

### THE CORRESPONDENCE AUDIT (CONT'D)

#### 3. FORM

However well the dictator has framed his message in strong and to-the-point words, 'the strength of the message itself is marred or magnified by how it looks on the page.'<sup>1</sup> The first impression upon the reader, as measured by the appearance of the letter, can make or break its effect.

The reader may not know how order is achieved but he recognizes it: it affects him. We all know of the enormous care which goes into an important advertising layout; its evident order proves it. The layout man knows that balance and good proportion have as harmonious an effect to the eye as good music to the ear. The reader does not need know how order is put in: if it is not there, he will feel the jarring effect of unbalance, be distracted. A good letter cannot afford that.

The wise business house is careful of all its contacts with the outside. Its advertising, the package of its product, the product itself are all designed for the greatest effect. The salesmen are carefully chosen and appearance is a big factor in the choice. One company dealing in food products put a mirror at the end of a corridor, down which the

1. Robert R. Aurner, Effective Business Correspondence, Cincinnati, Southwestern Publishing Co. 1939 Page 31.



driver-salesmen in their white uniforms passed to their trucks. They say themselves as the customers would see them. <sup>1</sup>

The business letter is just as representative of a house. Its appearance can justify its heavy expense: it can waste the money spent. Because of this heavy cost, care to every detail of the letter is demanded not only indeed to justify the cost but to help reduce it. For as study is made of the appearance, certain standards will evolve. The best appearing letter for that company will become the general rule and not the occasional exception. And standard practice reduces cost.

What is the analyst apt to find in his audit of the form of letters? This has been answered in a scholarly report by Benjamin R. Haynes and Irol Whitmore, called the "Mechanics of Business Letter Writing" <sup>2</sup> The investigators gathered 2718 letters from the files of different types of organization - public utilities, educational, governmental and offices of industry and manufacturing. Only individual letters were accepted, no mimeographed or other duplicated forms being allowed. All the letters were incoming in order to represent a better cross-section of letter-writers.

The purposes of this study as set forth on Page 7 were:

1. Hiram N. Rasely, Better Letters, Boston, Better Letters Institute, 1947 Part 9, Page 336.
2. Knoxville, University of Tenn. 1942.



1. To clarify the functions of each mechanical detail of a letter and show how the mechanical detail can successfully perform its function.
2. To point out the pitfalls which writers should avoid by conscious effort, as revealed by an analysis of actual business correspondence.
3. To present material which will serve as a guide for inexperienced writers and as a review or check for experienced writers.

The following part of this chapter is based mainly on the findings of Mr. Haynes and Miss Whitmore.

#### FORM ANALYSIS SCHEDULE

1

1. Format - Block A.....Modified Block A...  
Block B..Modified Block B..Indented...  
Hanging Indention.....Other....
2. Punctuation - Open --Modified Open....  
Close.....Other.....
3. Spacing - Single.....Double.....Triple...  
Number of spaces between paragraphs..
4. Number of paragraphs....
5. Size of paper -  $8\frac{1}{2}$  X 11... $8\frac{1}{2}$  X  $5\frac{1}{2}$ .. $8\frac{1}{4}$  X 14..  
Other....
6. Top Margin to date-line (in inches).....
7. Bottom margin (in inches)....
8. Spaces from date line to first line  
of address....
9. Margin, left (in inches)...
10. Margin, right (in inches)...

1. IBID Page 64 Adapted: for use in analyzing the form or appearance of business letters.







These standard formats are found on Pages 24 to 27 of Mechanics of Letter Writing.

In considering the form of the letters, the analyst is merely interested at this time to discover differences. There will not necessarily be any comparison now with a standard letter using, say, the block form or the modified block and so on. We may assume the standard letter has not yet been developed. However, he will look for imperfect balance, faulty proportions, poor placement on the letterhead which will rob the letter of attractiveness.

FORMAT AND PUNCTUATION - Without a definite guide to follow, the way the letter is laid out and punctuated will depend on the personal preference of the dictator, if any, or the good taste of the typist. Thus there is apt to be a wide variation. These were the findings of Haynes and Whitmore in an analysis of 2716 letters.

TABLE NO. III  
ANALYSIS OF LETTER FORMAT

<u>FORMAT</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
Block A	59	2.2
Modified		
Block A	5	.2
Block B	719	26.5
Modified		
Block B	1496	55.1
Indented	61	2.2
Hanging	3	1
Others	373	13.7
Total	2716	100.00

TABLE NO. IV  
ANALYSIS OF PUNCTUATION

<u>TYPE</u>	<u>#</u>	<u>%</u>
Open	202	7.4
Modified		
Open	1067	39.3
Close	768	28.3
Others	679	25.0
Total	2716	100.00

These tables adapted from Mechanics of Letter Writing IBID Page 28, Table 5.



SPACING WITHIN AND BETWEEN PARAGRAPHS - There is only one rule to remember in regard to spacing within and between paragraphs. Only single and double spacing are accepted in letter writing, but single is preferred in all but very short letters, and either spacing requires double spacing between paragraphs.<sup>1</sup>

In the Haynes-Whitmore analysis, there was found a predominance of correctly spaced letters.<sup>2</sup>

PARAGRAPHING - There was found dissimilarity in the breaking up of the body of the letter into readable sections. There can be no definite rule. But it is clear that a series of very short paragraphs would be unappealing and discouraging to the reader.

In general, it can be said that the opening and closing paragraphs should be short and longer paragraphs reserved for the middle of the letter. The variety of paragraphing is indicated in the following table.

TABLE NO. V  
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LENGTH OF LETTER IN  
PARAGRAPHS AND LINES IN BODY

<u>NUMBER OF PARAGRAPHS</u> <u>IN LETTER</u>	<u>RANGE OF LINES IN</u> <u>BODY OF LETTER</u>	<u>NUMBER OF</u> <u>LETTERS</u>
1	1 to 23	331
2	2 to 30	769
3	3 to 41	593
4	5 to 39	329

1. The investigators called a short letter one up to 499 strokes or 99 words. We might therefore call a very short letter one of 50 words.
2. IBID Page 44.



TABLE NO. V (CONT'D)

5	4 to 58	173
6	12 to 72	85
7	16 to 67	51
8	21 to 80	26
9	30 to 124	10
10 to 15	23 to 131	32
Total Letters....		2399

IBID PAGE 46 & 47 ADAPTED FROM TABLES  
12, 13...

LENGTH OF LETTER AND SIZE OF STATIONERY - It would seem there should be some colletion between length of letter and size of stationery. That is, short letters would appear better (and be less expensive) on short stationery, long letters on long stationery. Mr. Haynes and Miss Whitmore discovered that the length of letter seemingly had little relation to the size of stationery. Note in Table No. 6, below, how this is borne out, since the percentages of each of the groups of letters were similar for each of the sizes of stationery.

TABLE NO. VI

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LENGTH OF LETTER  
AND SIZE OF STATIONERY

<u>LENGTH OF LETTER</u>	<u>SIZE OF STATIONERY</u>					
	<u>8½ X 10½ (11)</u>	<u>OTHER</u>		<u>TOTAL</u>		
	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>NUMBER</u>	<u>%</u>
Short 1-99 Words	1271	50	87	58	1358	50
Medium 100-199 "	780	30	44	29	824	30
Long 200-299 "	261	10	12	8	273	10
Extra-Long 300-1800 "	256	10	7	5	263	10
TOTALS.....	2568	100%	150	100%	2718	100%

IBID P 19, adapted, table 2.



Thirty-seven different sizes of stationery were used in the 150 letters not written on  $8\frac{1}{2}$  X 11 or  $8\frac{1}{2}$  X  $10\frac{1}{2}$  stationery. The most frequently used sizes were  $7\frac{1}{4}$  X  $10\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  X  $7\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  X 7, and 8 X 10. <sup>1</sup>

MATHEMATICALLY IDEAL PROPORTION - In order to have a standard of comparison for the placement of the body of the letter, the investigators computed a set of measurements which would provide for the four extremes of an ideally proportioned letter, short, medium, long, extra-long. An ideally proportioned letter is one exactly proportionate to the measurements of the paper on which it is typed. Ideal relations of length of letter and width of line ( $8\frac{1}{2}$  by 11 paper) are as follows: <sup>2</sup>

<u>WIDTH OF LINE</u>	<u>VERTICAL LINES AVAILABLE</u>
4 inches	30
$4\frac{1}{2}$ "	35
5 "	39
$5\frac{1}{2}$ "	43
6 "	45

A line shorter than four inches was not considered because the copy would be overwhelmed by the white space around it. Nor was a wider line than six inches considered lest the letter have a crowded appearance.

By vertical lines available is meant the space between the date line at the top and the dictator's title, or last line, at the bottom. Thus, a typist with varying numbers

1. IBID PAGE 18.
2. IBID PAGE 35 adapted.



of words in her letters will expand the imaginary frame sideways as well as lengthwise in order to maintain ideal proportions. If she uses a 4 inch line she will have available within the 66 vertical lines of 11-inch long paper (6 lines to the vertical inch) 30 lines. If she widened her line to 6 inches for a longer letter, she would have 45 of 66 lines in order to keep the imaginary border in exact proportions.

TOP MARGIN - Using this ideally proportioned letter as a yardstick, the top margin of 2146 letters were measured for conformity. The top margin is that area from the top of the page to the date line. The data showed that of 2146 letters, 1622 or 75% did not conform to ideal proportions. The tendency was for short letters to be placed too high, and letters of other sizes to be placed too low. <sup>1</sup>

BOTTOM MARGIN - The width of the bottom margins varied from 0 to  $6\frac{1}{2}$  inches, although the desirable bottom margin should range from  $1\frac{3}{4}$  to  $3\frac{1}{4}$  inches according to ideal proportions. 1785 or 83% of 2146 letters did not conform to the ideal. <sup>2</sup>

SPACES FROM DATE-LINE TO FIRST LINE OF ADDRESS - The main consideration in the vertical placement of the date-line in relation to other parts of the letter is to place the line so that the entire letter will appear as one unit. No less

1. IBID PAGE 38, 39. Figures from table No. 9
2. IBID PAGE 39, Figures from table No. 10.



than 3 spaces should be allowed between date-line and inside address lest a top heavy or crowded effect be produced.

More than 6 spaces result in a disjointed effect or in the letter being placed too low on the paper. Therefore between 3 and 6 spaces will give the most pleasing effect. It was found that 50% or 1273 of the 2544 letters analyzed conformed to this standard. 567 or 22% had 0 to 2 spaces, 704 or 28% had 7 to 21 spaces. <sup>1</sup>

LEFT AND RIGHT MARGINS - In the perfectly balanced letter these margins will be equal. They will range, depending on the length of line from  $1\frac{1}{4}$  inches to  $2\frac{1}{4}$  inches. In 2146 letters considered the range of the left margins was from  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch to over 3 inches. The right margins ranged from 0 inches to over 3 inches. (The right margin was measured from the end of the longest line to the edge of the paper). Conformity with ideal proportions was low. About 70% of the left margins did not conform: About 83% of the right margins did not conform. <sup>2</sup>

RELATION OF HORIZONTAL LINE LENGTH AND DESIRABLE VERTICAL LINE LENGTH - In this section of the study, the body of the letter was measured against the ideal yardstick. We remember that a 4-inch horizontal line would have 30 vertical lines available, and so on. Within this frame lineage will be

1. IBID PAGE 30, Figures from table No. 6
2. IBID PAGE 42, Table 11.



taken up by the date line, inside address, salutation, complimentary close, company signature, dictator's signature, dictator's title, as well as the spaces between these items, and the spaces between paragraphs. This will use up, of the 30 vertical lines available (for a 4 inch horizontal line), 19 lines as a minimum. Thus the maximum number of vertical lines remaining for the body of the letter would be 11 lines for a 4 inch width: and 15, 19, 22 and 25 vertical lines for the  $4\frac{1}{2}$ , 5,  $5\frac{1}{2}$ , 6 inch horizontal lines respectively.

As a result of this comparison it was found that only 11% of a group of 2146 letters studied had a number of lines in the body proportionate to the length of line. <sup>1</sup>

SUMMARY - The implications of this analysis are clear. If uniformity of appearance and correct balance are assets in a business letter, the analyst will find much to correct in order to create these assets. Out of this analysis will grow the company's standard letter. Definite rules to guide the typist and to insure uniformity can be developed easily, a method of training and supervision installed, and standard practice guaranteed.



## CHAPTER V

### STIMULATING INTEREST

#### A. DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY

The correspondence coordinator has the two main truths about better letters to back up his selling campaign. The first, that better letters - live, brisk, good-will-building letters are necessary. The second recognizes that letters are an expensive tool of modern business: they cost too much to be careless of them.

Now, his main worry not only in the beginning but throughout the better-letters program is to stimulate and maintain interest. Backed up by the force of his personality, the presentation of the two facts to the assembled corresponding staff will generate interest, even enthusiasm. As he conducts his training program he will have further opportunity to rekindle interest. But undoubtedly he will find as the daily pressure of affairs asserts itself again, the spark will die. No sales campaign ever caught fire and kept burning with the first match. Steady stoking keeps the fires hot.

Why is this? One way of looking at it is the way Mogensen looks at work simplification. <sup>1</sup> Work simplification

1. Allan H. Mogensen, "Work Simplification in the Office" NOMA Proceedings 1946 Page 35, 36. A better letter campaign is, in its essence, work simplifying. It looks to the shortest, most effective, least expensive way to get favorable action. It achieves this by analyzing functions, discarding the needless, improving the necessary.



(and better letters!) is much more than short-cuts and gadgets. It is a philosophy. It is something that must start at the very top of an organization. The top must be sold actively to back it. Wholehearted cooperation and not dignified acquiescence must be inspired.

There must be a complete mental revolution on the part of everybody in the organization. And the hardest part of work simplification is getting people to want to do it. In the factory poor work is rejected and turns up as scrap. In the office, though, it is easy to waste work, and all the harder therefore to make people want to stop it.

Or consider the stimulation and maintenance of interest as a sales campaign....Kenneth M. Goode says:

"Any plan for successful action-getting advertising must include all the machinery necessary to take out of an advertiser's mind an intangible idea; and deliver it into other men's minds so clearly and vigorously as to bring about a definite physical act."

Two of the obstacles in the promoter's way, says Mr. Goode, are an astonishing normal inertia, and a universal impulse to resist the new. His success in the campaign will be measured by the extent to which he can arouse emotion, upset habit, and stimulate rationalization. <sup>2</sup>

Certainly the stimulation and maintenance of interest

1. Modern Advertising New York, Halcyon House 1937 Page 29.
2. IBID PAGE 430.



in a program of better letters is a sales campaign. The correspondence coordinator is definitely selling better letters to the staff as being beneficial to them and the company they serve. He must expect the "normal inertia" and the "impulse to resist the new."

Being necessarily something of a salesman - and hence a practical psychologist - he will know he must arouse emotion before any plan will even begin to work. He will find some appeal based frankly on the emotions, probably emulation (the "keeping-up-with-the-Jonesses appeal.") "I can write a better letter than he can", will be the motivation. Somehow the desire to write better letters, all the time, must be instilled.

On the basis of a desire created, our coordinator-salesman can begin to upset the habits so arduously formed and so lovingly cherished of writing "we wish to advise in reply to yours of the 13th," and "trusting that this is in accordance with your valued wishes, we remain," and so on through the lexicon of poor dictation and cloudy thinking, and dull expression. And to create a new set of good habits based on the common sense principles of better letters.

Finally in his campaign he will give the staff a rational basis for action. Man is prone to act through emotion, but always seeks a rational motive for his act. He rationalizes. Perhaps the most convenient rational motive is the money saved through better letters: or the extra income brought into the company through them.



So the auto-salesman sells a pea-green car to his customer who rationalizes..."Look at all the carfare I'll save, in the next year alone! " <sup>1</sup>

## B. METHODS OF STIMULATING INTEREST

The goal of the correspondence counselor is to encourage the staff to read critically every letter that comes in or goes out. He wants to make the staff letter-conscious, as a group. It must become 'the thing to do': The staff must compare their letters with others until gradually they will build up a pride in their letters and a consciousness that "our letters are better than theirs", or anybody else's! "

We shall consider in this section the dictators only because they are the real controllers of quality. The transcriber's duties being more technical and more easily defined, are adapted to the standard incentive systems which we will discuss in a later chapter.

What tools are at the disposal of the coordinator-counselor to keep "better letters" in the forefront of the dictator's mind? In general there are four: incentive plans based on competition, rating systems, group meetings, and periodical bulletins.

### 1. COMPETITIVE INCENTIVES

The usual incentive plans, based on production, are ill-adapted to good letter-writing for obvious reasons. Since

1. IBID PAGE 436.



the elements of time and standardized methods are basic in these plans, the very idea of a better letter - which is creative expression and hence not to be rushed, or turned out of a machine - makes it difficult to apply them.

But there are other incentives based not so much on the monetary reward but on the prestige to be gained: on the spirit of competition, the urge to win. The best example of such an incentive is the best-letter-of-the-week idea.<sup>1</sup>

BEST LETTER OF THE WEEK - It is a simple notion, but capable of great development. The coordinator can select several of the best letters in his regular checking of carbons: a committee of the correspondents can vote for the best from these to give a democratic flavor. Or a few top executives can be persuaded to act as judges. In order to gain all the psychological effect of true recognition, the best letter must be prominently displayed for all to see. A Better Letters Board properly placed, perhaps will give the best attention value.

Disagreement with the judges' choice is not a bad idea either. The normal reaction will be to bear down for the next week's contest. Even in disagreement, the staff will be eyeing the "best letter" critically, and by such conscious analysis picking up the better points to use themselves.

1. See R. H. Morris "New Trend in Correspondence" Office Management and Equipment Feb. '46 Page 72...also series of feature articles "\$25.00 for the Best Solution " by L. E. Frailey, year 1938 American Business.



If the correspondence department is not centralized, the spirit of better letters can permeate the whole organization by having the best letter each week from each department compete with all the others for the monthly award. Thus the best sales letter, or the best collection letter, or the best adjustment of the week may be crowned best of the month, and each department will seek the honor.

Not the least of the benefits of this plan will be the uncovering of new talent. The best letter-writers will rise to the top in competition and as so often happens, the least likely candidate may walk off with honors.

PRIZES FOR IDEAS - Offering prizes for new ideas to improve quality or production is another type of incentive.<sup>1</sup> It is open to all the dangers of the improperly planned suggestion system, which usually dies from sheer inertia. Mogensen stresses the common failing of such systems.<sup>2</sup> 5 or 10 or 20 percent of the ideas might be accepted. If the people are taught not only to examine every act and operation but also how to examine them analytically, 60 or 70 percent is not too large a rate to shoot for. And of course it is perfectly plausible to conduct as part of your training program a little seminar on how to gather facts about an operation, how to put them together, analyze them, look for unnecessary steps. You

1. See George B. Hotchkiss, Edward J. Kilduff, J. Harold Janis Advanced Business Correspondence, New York, Harper's & Bros. 1947, Page 493.
2. "Work Simplification in the Office" NOMA Proceedings 1946 Page 141.



You can make industrial engineers out of them, says Mogensen.

Other dangers of the suggestion system are the lack of acknowledgement and the delay in awarding prizes. I watched in two large concerns - a shipyard and a department store - the suggestion system die a slow death. Suggestions turned in went unheard of for weeks and months, then after the suggester had forgotten it, a small announcement on a bulletin board, or a cool note through the intercommunication system, would notify that the idea was unworkable.

Properly organized, however, the prizes, - for-new-ideas scheme can be made an enthusiasm builder. A committee formed, perhaps, of the correspondence counselor, a few members of the staff - including a transcriber - and a top executive should meet every week, analyze each idea, acknowledge it immediately, and pay off immediately, or suggest a new approach to the suggester.

The prize schedule should be generous for one reason: the money spent by the company is to build morale and not to buy an idea. The rewards are an investment binding the staff closer in loyalty to the company they serve. The man feels he belongs, who has his idea recognized and incorporated into the scheme of things. Every idea, refused, which goes back with a suggested way to improve it, combined with a figurative slap on the back for the interest displayed, will encourage more and better suggestions.

2. RATING PLANS - It is possible to create a sense of rivalry



by rating each dictator with some objective rating plan - measured, say for conciseness, clarity, tone, opening and closing, etc. All dictator's ratings can be posted from time to time on the Better Letters Board. Here again the incentive to improve, where the rating indicates less than perfection, should appear when others show better ratings.

Hotchkiss suggests a rating of both proficiency and deficiency for each dictator to be submitted to department heads at least once a month.<sup>1</sup> He admits the executives may be skeptical at first, but before long will find that letter-writing ability is a remarkably sound index of the all-round usefulness of the man. This type of official rating - of which the dictator is aware - properly used, can become one basis for promotion or salary-increase and hence should encourage better letters.

There are several suggested rating plans for letters. Rasely has a list of items upon which to base such a plan.<sup>2</sup> A partial list includes:

Clearness	Tone
Conciseness	Construction
Emphasis	Company Policy
Correctness	Interest
Attitude	Special Remarks

L. E. Frailey gives a rating scale in which each of the following elements is expanded to guide the analyst.<sup>3</sup>

1. Advanced Business Correspondence, New York, Harper Bros. 1947, Page 492.
2. Better Letters, Boston, Better Letters Institute 1947 Part 11, Page 420.
3. Smooth Sailing Letters, New York, Prentice Hall 1938, P XIII



For example, under language, the analyst would ask, Are the words short, natural? Would the average person know the meaning? Is it free from rubber-stamp phrases? Is it simple, conversational?

The elements are:

- 1 Appearance
- 2 Language
- 3 Argument
- 4 Carpentry
- 5 Personality
- 6 Spirit
- 7 Result (good general impression)

On each of the first six points grade the letter 15 if exceptionally good, 10 if above average, 5 if doubtful, 0 if poor. On point seven, if answer is yes give 10, if no give nothing. The best total is 100.

A fairly objective measure of a letter, and one which the dictator may be prompted to apply to his own letters since it does not depend on judgment, is an adaptation of the Flesch Scale of Readability.<sup>1</sup> This measure is based on the theory that short words, short sentences and a heavy sprinkling of personal references make a letter easy to understand and hence more effective. The goal of the dictator, of course, should be to keep his letters at standard or beneath it.

	<u>AVERAGE SENTENCE LENGTH</u> <u>IN WORDS</u>	<u>AFFIXES PER</u> <u>100 WORDS</u>	<u>PERS. REFS.</u> <u>PER 100 WORDS</u>
Very Difficult	29	54	2
Difficult	25	46	3

1. As reported in "How Does Your Writing Read", an 11 page pamphlet published by U.S. Civil Service Commission, 1946 P 10. The standard scale is shown on Page 53 of this thesis, applied to a series of collection letters.



(CONT'D)

Fairly Difficult	21	42	4
Standard	17	37	6
Fairly Easy	14	31	10
Easy	11	26	14
Very Easy	8	22	19

Let us define 'affix' again for clearness' sake.

It means a prefix or suffix which modifies the original root of a word. In "undeservedly", the root "serve", is modified by "un", "de," and "ed," "ly", or four affixes. The more we use root words only, the easier our writing is to understand.

The previous paragraph measured by this scale shows 16 words per sentence, 40 affixes per hundred (because of "undeservedly!") and 6 personal references per hundred. This is at the level of standard.

### 3. GROUP MEETINGS

Regular conferences of the letter-writing staffs of the various sections are generally mentioned by various authors as a stimulator of interest in better letters. One, a correspondence consultant, guarantees not only interest but improvement.<sup>1</sup>

The discussion is led by the correspondence counselor, but the key to enthusiastic response is to draw out each dictator so that he offers his contribution. The basis of the conference should be the carbon copies of these dictator's letters.<sup>2</sup>

1. R. H. Morris "New Trend in Correspondence", Office Management and Equipment Feb. 1946 Page 72.
2. Hiram Rasely and Roy Davis, Better Letters, Boston Better Letters Institute, 1947 Part 11 Page 417.



"Letter-writers" says Rasely, "will often take more kindly to discussion and criticism of their dictated work by fellow workers than be the counselor or an outsider."

Small groups of dictators at a time produce better results. <sup>1</sup> For example, the counselor can meet the sales group one week, the credit group the next. In this way, the specific problems to be faced by each group can be discussed by the men who must face similar problems. The members of each group are urged to send in advance to the counselor, carbon copies of letters they would like discussed. In this way, by helping to plan the conference themselves they will enter into the spirit of it more readily.

A splendid way to brighten up the conference is to devote a portion of each meeting to a problem - and-solution session. <sup>2</sup> A troublesome problem can be set which one department might meet in its daily work. The dictators of all departments tackle the problem. It becomes a contest open to all. The various solutions are judged by company executives and announced at each conference. The department immediately concerned with the contest problem will exert itself more than usual in order to win the contest. It would not look good to have a member of the credit department write the best answer to a sales inquiry! The other departments will exert themselves to show they can handle any problem.

1. IBID Page 417

2. Hotchkiss, Kilduff and Janis, Advanced Business Correspondence Harper's New York.



Problems will suggest themselves from the current correspondence. For example....

Smith Service Co. writes that our prices on top grade special oil is 10 cents a gallon higher than he has to pay elsewhere. He does not name competitor. He asks for price adjustment accordingly. What would your reply be?

Or,

Corona, Inc. is one of our best customers buying between \$50,000 and \$75,000 each year. But they consistently allow their invoices to run 40 to 60 days. What letter can we write to stop this practice?

Prizes will offer zest to the contest. Discussion of the best letter and why it won will pep up the dullest conference, especially if there is disagreement based on good judgment. Of course, disgruntled disagreement will test the counselor, but if he has been accepted as an expert and is something of a diplomat, his decision will usually be accepted. Not the least of the virtues of the contest idea, as already suggested in the best-letter-of-the-week plan, is the uncovering of new talent. A man writing collection letters may turn up with a true flair for sales copy and so on. Except for the contest, his abilities would have gone unrecognized.

4. BULLETINS - The better letter bulletin is perhaps the best propaganda weapon in the armory of the counselor. Here,



by the written word, he can justify his claims that action is won by skillful expression. Here he can prove that good will redounds to the persuasive pen. His customers are primarily the dictators: his aim to inspire better letters. But since the regular bulletin is such good propaganda for better letters, it should be sent to department heads, transcribers, branches and salesmen.<sup>1</sup>

The bulletin may be as elaborate or as simple as the counselor may desire or have budget for. The main job of the designer must be to get reader-interest and keep it, lest his message be lost. Charles Riker laid out his Westinghouse Co. Bulletins - called "Our Letters" - to insure reader attention.<sup>2</sup> Across the masthead he threw a broad band of orange: he made the headlines arresting - evidently borrowing these techniques from the advertising man. Cartoons repeated the central theme - a picture is worth a thousand words. For example, in pointing out that "I" should be used occasionally even in "you" attitude letters, the cartoon was the big clincher. Under an appropriate drawing was the caption, "It is love you are being extended herewith."

The body of the bulletin was organized, too, for getting over the point most effectively. Short paragraphs of varying width, different type sizes, an informal man to man

1. Hiram Rasely & Roy Davis, Better Letters, Boston, Better Letters Institute, 1947 Part 11, Page 422.
2. "Promoting Better Letters" Executives Service Bulletin Feb. 1945, Page 3 published by Met. Life Insurance Co.



style were used to carry the one idea to which each bulletin was limited. One idea should be sold at a time, repeated with examples, summarized, cartooned and so on. It is "extremely difficult to get readers to absorb an idea new to them." <sup>1</sup>

To encourage interest, as well as to get a good feature story, Riker invited the transcribers to offer their opinions and comments on the dictators' practices. The response was not only spontaneous, it was large. An 8-page bulletin reported the results. As hoped, the dictator's enjoyed and benefited from it.

Montgomery Ward uses periodical bulletins in order to stimulate interest in better letters. It is entitled...

Better Letters - An Occasional Bulletin  
Devoted to the Improvement of Our  
Customer Relations.

A large mail-order house must insure a continued interest in the best correspondence practices. Mr. F. H. Roy, Correspondence Supervisor of Ward's, says that the Better Letter Bulletins and test problems from the daily mail are used as the basis of the 15 day training course for correspondents.

The subjects in the Ward Bulletins range from "Selling Versus Stalling", a discussion of the best way to handle claims. Another captioned, "Make Your Work a Pleasure Instead of a Task", sells pride in the profession of correspond-

1. IBID P.3 This agrees with Mr. Goode's analysis of the difficulty of promoting a sales campaign.
2. In a letter to me, dated Dec. 11, 1947.



end, and the certainty of advancement to those interested in their jobs. One called, "Are Your Letters Sales Letters," summarizes its message: <sup>1</sup>

You aren't selling hosiery nor  
hammers, corsets nor canned goods..  
but a solution to the purchaser's  
problem.....Let that fact always  
guide your approach and your  
presentation.

The attractive layout, with distinctive masthead and colored ink laid on by the planograph process, can be seen in the Bulletin No. 94 on the following pages.

1. Montgomery Ward's Bulletins, bound Jan. 1948 for company use, Bulletin #92 A.

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1968



# Better Letters

... AN OCCASIONAL BULLETIN  
DEVOTED TO THE IMPROVEMENT  
OF OUR CUSTOMER RELATIONS

---

MONTGOMERY WARD

BULLETIN NO. 94

---

## SELLING VERSUS STALLING

A few days ago, a customer wrote this letter to one of our Mail Order Houses:

"I am interested in your electric sewing machine, but want to know just what attachments come with it and whether there is a button-hole attachment. Does a Singer buttonhole attachment fit on it?

"What are the sewing machine prices and what are the terms of payment?"

If you owned a sewing machine store, what would you give for a thousand prospective customers like this one? You could afford to be pretty liberal, couldn't you? And if you had the machines and were a good salesman undoubtedly you could close over 90% of them at a good profit for yourself.

But how many sales would you make if you took care of your prospects the way this inquiry was handled by letter.

"We have your request for information regarding the availability of our sewing machines. We are happy to say that at the present time this item is available for immediate shipment. We suggest that you place your order with us immediately.

"If you care to order this item from us under our Time Payment plan, it will be necessary for you to answer the questions on the reverse side of this letter and return it to us with your order. In this way an investigation can be made and a Time Payment account opened in your name. Until we have this information, it will be impossible to advise you as to the down payment and the monthly payments necessary on this item.

"A buttonhole attachment is available for all of our machines at an extra charge of \$10.80.

"We suggest that you go to your nearest Ward Order Office or Retail Store or select a machine from our catalog."

An analysis of this inquiry and our reply shows that we have not given the customer the information she wants or asks, and it will be necessary for her to write us again before she can place her order. She wants to know if the Singer attachments will fit our machine, which we ignore, and we do not tell her the price or give her the terms which she specifically requests. We just "brush her off" and answer the points that are the easiest for us to handle in a mechanical way.

The whole story is that the correspondent didn't take the time or take enough interest in the customer's problem to write a complete letter. We leave her "out on a limb," not a bit wiser, and probably with a feeling of disgust because of our inattention to her request. How much better it would be and how much better she would feel toward Montgomery Ward had we written her somewhat like this:

"You will be glad to know that the electric sewing machines you asked about are available for immediate shipment. They are illustrated in our Fall and Winter Catalog on pages 824-825 which are enclosed. Any model you select will be a great time saver and a real pleasure to operate.

"The Supreme Reversible Rotary Cabinet Model No. 85A4997R, priced at \$104.95 is a real buy. When it is not in use it can easily be changed into a beautiful walnut veneer table that will add to the appearance of any room. Along with this machine you will receive a complete set of sixteen attachments. Almost every type of sewing can be done on this machine. The appearance of the sewing looks like professional work, and then, too, it is done so quickly.

"If you prefer a small model why not consider our portable machine No. 85A1197Y priced at \$84.96. This machine can conveniently be carried from one room to another with very little effort as it weighs only 50 pounds. It is also fully equipped with a complete set of attachments.

"We are sorry that the Singer buttonhole attachment will not fit Wards machines. You may, however, order the buttonhole attachment for our machine at an additional charge of only \$10.80.

"We will be glad to have you order on our Monthly Payment Plan. Please fill in the questions on the other side of this letter and return it with your order, enclosing the down payment which is one-third the purchase price. This amount is required by government regulation on this type of merchandise."

In handling correspondence, one of our major difficulties today is in organizing our work so that we do not slight the customer's problem in one way or another. Seldom do we see an inquiry or complaint that shows the points to be covered are numbered or underscored so they will not be overlooked. It should be easy to answer the things the reader wants to know because we have them in writing and there isn't any excuse for ignoring a specific request.

Abraham Lincoln once said that in preparing for a debate he spent two-thirds of his time thinking about what his opponent was going to say, and one-third of his time studying what he was going to say. Wouldn't this be a good rule for us to follow--to spend more time thinking about the reader's reaction to our letters and less time on unimportant details which will have little bearing on the actual results.

We depend upon our customers to keep our stores open and our mail order houses in operation. When we lose one customer and are fortunate enough to get a new one, we haven't gained a thing--we only break even. So if we are to grow and prosper, we must not only hold our old customers, but get many new ones as well.



Correspondence Supervisor

```

* * * * *
*
* Adjust complaints and handle inquiries *
* promptly, completely, fairly, and, above *
* all, pleasantly. Otherwise your letters *
* are a total loss.
*
* * * * *

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## CHAPTER VI

### THE TRAINING PROGRAM

#### A. TRAINING OF DI CTATORS

The company which considers correspondence as a function of public relations will take definite steps to train its dictators: for letters are emissaries of the company, leaving its doors on errands of good-will. The letters which consistently build good-will are not casually turned out: such letters are the product of skill in interpreting the policies of the company in terms of service to its clients, suppliers and associates.

Such skill in dictating is only developed through training. Experience has taught us that for some reason, even good speakers of the English language do not write it effectively. This is particularly true in business letters where the "formula" has taken the place of incisive expression. The training to overcome this habit and develop real skill is a necessary adjunct to the control of correspondence.

One of the leading authorities in the field of correspondence control sketches the following results from an effective and continuing training program. <sup>1</sup> Such a program:

1. Hiram N. Rasely, in Office Management - A Handbook, editor, Coleman L. Maze, New York Ronald Press, 1947 Page 576.



1. Acquaints dictators with company policies and systems;
2. Reduces the break-in time for new employees;
3. Acts as a refresher in keeping letter-writers informed of changes in policies or systems;
4. Creates interest;
5. Is a vehicle for increased efficiency and continued improvement through extended study.

The main methods of training dictators to increase their skill are these - the company letter-writing course, and the dictator's manual.

#### 1. THE COMPANY LETTER-WRITING COURSE

There is general agreement among the authorities that some form of classroom training is necessary. Even though it is difficult in a given company to gather all the correspondents together regularly at a given time, yet, says Hotchkiss, <sup>1</sup>

"....the best and most permanent results have been secured when at least part of the educational work has been accomplished by classroom training or in group conference."

As a basis for the course, the faults turned up in the correspondence audit are solid subject matter. <sup>2</sup> Or as Rasely suggests, the letters coming in and going out daily

1. Advanced Business Correspondence, New York Harper Bros. 1947 Page 496.
2. IBID Page 495



are fine material for letter-writing problems in the workshop sort of class. <sup>1</sup> Many companies follow these practical techniques in their educational programs. Examples of such companies follow.

THE ESSO COMPANY - The method of this company, with its many branches, is a logical one. <sup>2</sup> Realizing that an educational program is best conducted by a teacher, it invites a business college professor of Correspondence to conduct the class. Failing in a given community to find such a specialist, a professor of English is asked; or lacking a nearby college, a high school teacher of English is sought.

In order to make the course most beneficial to Esso dictators, a large backlog of material, based on specific problems in the form of company correspondence, is presented to the teacher. An outline of the general approach he should follow is given him too; but beyond that he is given carte blanche to present the material as his own teaching methods indicate. Stressed in this course are these points:

1. Readability - here diction is stressed..no long words are permitted: clarity is the goal.
2. Beginnings and Endings - the flying start in come-to-the-point openings: where to end is a hard lesson, too, for some dictators.
3. Tone - it must be friendly

1. Better Letters, Boston, Better Letters Institute, 1947 Part 11, Page 425.
2. Based on an interview with Prof.W.P.deMille, Boston Univ. who conducts the Esso Co. course; Jan.7, 1948 Boston, Mass.



- cordial, helpful.
- 4. Preparation - relax, be natural, just talk.
- 5. Conversationality - write as you talk is the theme of this.

Each course runs for 13 weeks, one hour a week.

Groups of 25 dictators and stenos attend. The workshop approach is used as much as possible - the best way to learn to write letters, is to write letters. Correspondents are encouraged to bring their own letters for analysis, and their own problems for discussion. Motion pictures are used as visual aids: however, it is noted that these are mainly valuable for their entertainment value when the correspondents start writing according to the new principles discussed.

Perhaps the best part of this course is the follow-up feature. The instructor schedules individual conferences with the members of his class. Professor deMille claimed that he could do his best work here, when he could meet just one type of problem to solve it.

LEVER BROS. COMPANY - This company, under the "Literary Counselor", conducts three different kinds of training program. 1

1. Classes for young men and women, most of whom are not writing letters. The purpose of training these people is to have a group ready for promotion or sub-

1. From a sketch of Correspondence Control for Lever Bros. Co. Cambridge, Mass. Used by permission of the Literary Counselor, Charles E. Buck, who wrote the sketch (unpublished) in 1947.



stitution wherever written work is needed. Classes are held for 15 weeks, one hour a week, once a year.

2. Classes for letter-writers, periodically covering letter-writing problems, business expressions, vocabulary building.
3. Classes for stenos and typists. These are periodical group-meetings to discuss such points as..

Letter-form	Spelling
Word Use	Syllabification
Grammar	Appearance
Responsibility of steno and typist.	

At each meeting of the beginners' class one letter-writing topic is discussed; letters are analyzed and some correspondence problem is solved. Words - pronunciation and usage - are studied each week to broaden the students' range of expression. After the students have begun to dictate, the counselor checks the carbons for as long as is necessary, to certify Lever Bros. high standards are maintained.

MONTGOMERY-WARD COMPANY - This large mail-order house conducts a training program for its correspondents. <sup>1</sup> The basis of their 30-hour course (2 hours a day for 15 days) is now a manual of 68 Better Letter Bulletins which were mentioned in the last chapter. The principles of better letters are taught, using the letters in the Bulletins which present problems faced in the past: also, letters received

1. From a letter from F. H. Roy, Correspondence Supervisor, December 11, 1947. The manual was newly published in Jan. 1948: previously bulletins were used unbound.



from Ward's customers test the ability of the student to meet present problems. Each branch mail-order house has its own instructor who also is the branch correspondence supervisor.

OUTLINE OF A COURSE IN BETTER LETTERS - How would a course be organized to achieve optimum results? Probably in each company the details would differ, but the frame of the course could very likely follow the outline suggested below.<sup>1</sup> The general pattern in this basic course would be this: a short discussion of a key principle by the instructor, followed by a workshop in which the student-correspondents would solve a given problem involving this principle, by writing a letter. Then would follow class analysis of the solutions; and finally analysis of actual company letters now being mailed. Groups should be small for greater individual attention. Probably a two-hour period per week for about 15 weeks (see Montgomery-Ward) is the minimum time to do the best job.

1. THE BUSINESS LETTER. Here might be discussed the importance of letters to build good-will, which is the reason for better letters.
2. MAKING THE LETTER EFFECTIVE. Probably several sessions will be necessary to eradicate the habits of using jargon instead of simple, every-day English. Other principles to attain effectiveness can be defined such as the right opening, avoiding too much "I", short sentences and so on.

1. Based on the Course for Business Letter-Writers, offered by Better Letters Institute, Boston, Mass. in early part of 1948.



3. WORDS - These are the tools of the correspondent and must be sharpened well. Discussion and practice in avoiding useless, unnecessary words pays dividends. Short words are best. Some vocabulary building fits here too.
4. HOW TO DICTATE. Technical advice on the best way to approach daily dictation will stress naturalness. A systematized schedule, jotting down ideas in margins of letters to be answered, clear enunciation are high points. Dictating machines will be used as the best teaching aid.
5. WRITING LETTERS THAT SELL. Not so much sales-letters as such, but the injection of the sales and service attitude into letters is the point of this section. Analysis of the reader of the letter and his motivations are bases for discussion.
6. KEEPING THE CUSTOMERS' GOOD-WILL. Here the approach is straightening out complaints by mail, with techniques for saving the customer while maintaining consistent policies.
7. THE COLLECTION LETTER. How can money be collected by cordiality and a spirit of service, rather than by threats?
8. STYLE - Emphasis here is on the elements of style; how to write colorfully, gracefully, effectively.
9. APPEARANCE OF THE LETTER. Instruction is given in the company standard forms; how to use mechanical devices for effect; punctuation.
10. LETTER ANALYSIS - A survey of the main points to judge in a letter.

Notice that in this outline all the types of letters are included for instruction, even though members of the group are primarily dictators of only one type v.g. credit letters



or sales letters. The virtue of this broad course is to expand the point-of-view of each specialist. Thus, the collection man will gain a sales point-of-view, or the sales letter-writer will become acquainted with the problems of adjustment created by an incomplete sales job.

## 2. THE DICTATOR'S MANUAL

An authoritative company manual for dictators is a valuable aid in the training program. It serves as a guide to the dictation of better company letters, summarizing the principles of sound expression of company policy covered in the classroom training. In many companies it takes the place of class-room training.

The manual may be a simple booklet of a few pages or an elaborate well-bound presentation, depending on the needs of the company. In general however the person preparing the manual will have these points in mind: <sup>1</sup>

1. The manual must be "tailored" to the specific company to be of everyday use. It must not be merely a collection of rules and data gathered mostly from books.
2. It should be revised constantly. Hence, loose-leaf binding is best. In order to prevent obsolete material from remaining, LeTourneau Co. of Georgia requires sheets, which are replaced, to be returned to the Procedures Department.
3. The manual should be concise and limited as possible. One of the main reasons why manuals fail is because of wordiness and poor arrangement. An index



preferably with the ready-reference feature of a right-margin extension, is necessary.

4. "If it's worth publishing, it's worth illustrating", is a good rule-of-thumb. For greater interest and effectiveness, pictures, cartoons, charts etc. are invaluable. Extra expense is more than repaid by the extra ease of comprehension.
5. Reproduction of the manual will be determined by the number to be issued. A good looking booklet can be mimeographed if relatively made. The planograph (offset printing) process is relatively inexpensive. Its main virtue is the simplicity of reproducing illustrations without the added expense of cuts. If a large circulation is expected, perhaps a well-printed manual is justified.

In preparing the dictator's manual it is good to keep in mind also the reasons why most manuals fail to do their job. The following list suggests what to avoid: <sup>1</sup>

Manuals fail because they are,

1. Poorly arranged; it is hard to find things.
2. Too complex and wordy.
3. Too large and bulky.
4. Poorly produced and unattractive; hard to read; hard on the eyes.
5. Out of date, obsolete.
6. Not slanted to the employees who use them.
7. Too abstract; employee is never taught how to use them.

1. IBID Page 56.



In order to indicate what might best be included in the dictator's manual, there follows a brief description of different company manuals, now in use. They range from a simple summary of Ediphone Training Notes to a comprehensive analysis of the worst faults of letter-writers and how to avoid them.

RELIANCE ELECTRIC AND ENGINEERING COMPANY. This company gives its sales trainees a simple set of notes to guide them when they start dictating. <sup>1</sup> Called "Notes from Ediphone Training Class", it sets down a list of 14 good habits for dictators to develop, all the way from #1 "Organize your thoughts first", to #14, "Be sure the lever is on Talk, when you are dictating." Included is a standard code for letters of the alphabet, A for able, B for baker, and so on.

THE EMPLOYERS' GROUP - This large insurance company uses a very attractive mimeographed and illustrated booklet called "Ediphone Etiquette." <sup>2</sup> Its preface says,

"By practising the suggestions made here, you will improve your dictating technique and please us as well. Will you, by your cooperation, help us turn out letters YOU will be PROUD to sign?

Yours for BETTER LETTERS  
Your Ediphone Operators."

1. Courtesy of Kathryn Wilson, Sales Service Dept. of this company in Cleveland, Ohio. "Notes" is dated August 1947.
2. Courtesy of Richard Alger, Head of Methods Dept. of this company in Boston, Mass. Booklet issued in 1947.



The booklet of 10 pages is written in a fresh, easy going style. What perks it up most, however, is the profusion of rebus-like cartoons scattered throughout. For example, the instruction says, "Although the cylinders are sturdy, avoid handling them roughly." The cartoon is an Ediphone cylinder endowed with a pair of arms and bulging biceps which it proudly flexes. It says "B for - " and then a picture of a Baker for the word; and a fine chocolate cake in "C for cake."

Thus a rather dry subject has been lightened considerably. The points covered include.

How to handle the cylinder to keep it clean, unscratched, unsmudged. How to use mouth-piece - against the upper lip, without gum or cigar.

How to insure accuracy in transcribing - speak clearly, spell names, say "quote" and "close quote".....  
How to use the indices.

THE DENNISON COMPANY - "Dennison's Letter-writing" is a manual aimed at improving the technique of expression rather than the mechanical process of dictating.<sup>1</sup> The first part is devoted to the standard Dennison Form, the modified-block; the standard practices in stationery; and a few basic suggestions on how to dictate. But the major portion

1. Courtesy of Lillian McCollum, Supervisor of Correspondence Dept. of this company in Framingham, Mass. Oct. 31, 1947.



stresses simplicity of language, the importance of planning the letter, the need for clarity and coherence.

A long list of hackneyed expressions to be avoided are set down, with a clear exposition of why they should be avoided. For example:

Attached hereto	Enclosed herewith
As per	Upon receipt of
Above mentioned	Under separate cover

To point up how meaningless these trite expressions are, Carolyn Wells' satire on the common misuse of the word "beg" is included. Here is an excerpt:

They beg to inquire and they beg to state,  
 They beg to advise and they beg to relate:  
 They beg to observe and they beg to mention  
 They beg to call your kind attention;  
 .....  
 They reluctantly beg for a moment of time,  
 They beg to submit you an offer sublime;  
 'Till I wish I could put the annoying array  
 Of beggars on horseback and send 'em away.

Short but adequate coverage is given such topics as,

Paragraph Length  
 Coherence - with a list  
 of connectives  
 Accuracy  
 Clearness  
 Completeness  
 Conciseness  
 Openings and Closings.

NASHUA GUMMED AND COATED PAPER COMPANY - The manual of  
 this company is a complete letter-writing instruction book.

1

1. Courtesy of author Hiram Rasely, Better Letters Institute, Boston, Mass. This company is in New Hampshire



It was designed not only to instruct the correspondents of this company how best to devise their techniques, but also to serve as a standard guide to good practice for the daily letter-writing problems which might arise to plague the correspondent.

It is replete with examples of poor letters with their revisions. The main point of view is this: most letters can be made better letters by making them concise. With this in mind, the author has attacked all the main faults in letter-writing and shows how each can be corrected with less words.

Some of the major treatments in this manual are:

Dead Language in Letters.

Many examples are shown from actual company letters, pointing out the dangers. Revisions show how to revive such letters and simplify them, too.

The "WE" Attitude. It should be replaced by the "YOU" Attitude, friendly, cordial, and in the spirit of service.

Big Words, Long Sentences and Paragraphs.

Planning Your Letter for Clearance, Simplicity.

Argumentativeness Creates Ill-Will.

Get Off to a Flying Start.

Be Positive, Not Negative.

Before You Dictate.

Model Letters as Samples of Good Dictation.



## B. TRAINING OF STENOS & TYPISTS

The other half of the dictating team, the stenotypist will respond well to an organized training program. In most companies where correspondence is not controlled, this training takes the form of individual instruction of the new employee usually by one of the staff. The danger of this course lies in the inability of the instructor to define the company standards, because usually there are none to define.

In those firms which have taken steps in a program of control, definite standards are set up for the stenotypist to follow. The dictation process generally uses machines (Dictaphone, Ediphone, etc.) instead of stenos. The transcription process will be more or less centralized under a transcription supervisor.

Under these conditions, the training program generally has two methods for developing the members of the staff into high-production, low-cost workers:

1. Step-by-step advancement;
2. The typists' manual.

### 1. STEP-BY-STEP ADVANCEMENT

In this method of training within the department, the new person is broken in by the supervisor. She will be given a brief orientation, then put to work on the lower level jobs. The progression is described by Carl H. Page, in



the following manner: 1

"The training program will include instruction by the supervisor, practice on the typewriter and on the transcribing machines, elementary typing and form work, and a start on simple transcribing. In other words, there is a progression from simple to more difficult work, the employee at the same time being engaged in actual production to earn her keep. This plan fits in very well with a step-up division of the department into typing, stenographic and transcribing work."

Another way of using this the step-by-step system is through job classification from the lowest to the highest. For example in the Quaker Oats Co., young girls are hired right from school as messengers. 2 They operate out of the Stenographic Department.

There is probably no quicker way, than as messengers, to learn the various routines and functions of a business. The messengers are given an opportunity to learn also all the jobs in a Steno department, by observation and by actually doing certain of the minor jobs such as cutting simple stencils.

When the messenger has shown enough ability she becomes a Junior Typist and is assigned to general typing work. Since no specialization is permitted, she will handle all kinds of typing work of lesser difficulty. The next

1. A Guide to the Organization and Operation of a Central Transcribing Department...New York Life Office Management Association, 1940.
2. Eugene Whitmore, "Do Business Letters Cost Too Much," American Business July 1944, Page 10



step-up is to statistical typist; then to Dictaphone Operator; and finally to Stenographer. The Stenographer is eligible to work out of the Stenographic Pool which supplies shorthand experts to dictators who cannot use dictaphone machines for a particular job. This pool rotates so that every Stenographer learns the functions of every department.

## 2. THE TYPISTS' MANUAL

Virtually every company which controls its correspondence at all, uses a manual for its stenos, typists and transcribers. In fact, this manual may be called the common denominator of correspondence control. Most companies differ in the kind or amount of control they feel is necessary, but in this one feature most agree. The typists' manual lays down the standard practices of the company regarding the appearance of their correspondence. Using the manual as a guide, the typist will turn out a consistently good looking letter.

In order to insure familiarity with the company's policy and to get the most value out of its manual, some companies, v.g. Dennison Mfg. Co. of Framingham, Mass., will not permit transcribers to start work until they are tested in their knowledge of the manual. <sup>1</sup> This of course, is the most intelligent way to use it; it serves as a training tool, as well as a handbook of reference, during the daily work.

1. In an interview with Paul McBride, Office Service Manager, October 31, 1947.



CONTENTS OF MANUAL - These are based on manuals of

R. G. LeTourneau, Inc. Peoria,  
Ill.

Western Electric Co. New York.

Lyon Metal Products Co. Aurora,  
Ill.

and "Letter Perfect" a booklet  
issued in 1947 by Royal Type-  
writing Co. of New York.

TABLE OF CONTENTS, INDEX - A well organized table of contents will save precious time when a typist would look up a doubtful point, or check a little used standard. The thumb-index, along the right margin for ready reference, is also a time-saver.

PICTURE OF PRODUCTS - Especially when the firm manufactures unusual products which are unfamiliar to the transcriber, it makes sense to illustrate them. All too often the transcriber will never see what she writes about every day: pictures will save any errors made through ignorance of the product.

NAMES OF MANAGEMENT & KEY PERSONNEL - Since it is most important that dictators' names and top men in other branches of the company be spelled correctly, this list of names - and branch addresses - belongs right up front in the manual.

LETTERHEADS - Samples of all stationery used by the company should be bound into the book, usually with the proper use of each printed across each sample. For example, on the sample of the outgoing letterhead we might read.....

This is Form #202, called  
"Lithographed Letterhead."  
Use it for all correspondence  
outside the company.



Other varieties of stationery will include air-mail stationery, interoffice sheets, yellow file copies, onion-skin copy paper for other carbons, plain paper for general copy work, second sheets and so on.

ENVELOPES - Complete instructions for the proper type of envelope to use should be put down, preferably accompanied by pictures of each envelope. Normally envelopes available will include the small #6, the legal size #9, the window envelope, the Du-Plex envelope for combination fourth and first-class mailing, and so on.

MODEL LETTERS - The simplest way to illustrate the standard practice of letter layout is to include samples laid out properly. Customarily the letters will call attention to the various settings of the typewriter, placement of headings, body and closings, width of margins, etc. All usual types of correspondence would be represented, for example, one page and two-page letters, quotations interoffice and interbranch memos. A Western Electric Model Letter appears on Page 103.



WESTERN ELECTRIC COMPANY

Incorporated

195 BROADWAY NEW YORK 7, N.Y.

Cortland 7-7700

Special Delivery PRIVATE

July 31, 1947

MR. H. R. PRESTON, Secretary  
The Monroe Manufacturing Company  
321 Bicket Street  
Philadelphia 3, Pennsylvania

Dear Sir:

Re: Correspondence Manual. File: 120.4

This is a specimen illustrating the style of letter resulting from the use of the standards recommended in this Manual. It is written in block form. Paragraphs are not indented, but are indicated by double spacing.

The mailing reference and classification are typed 12 spaces from top of letthead beginning at left margin. When name and title on letterhead interfere with this arrangement, type at left margin 2 spaces from top of sheet. Lower to 4 spaces when "Subject" of Engineering Letter is positioned as above. The date is typed 14 spaces from top of the letter head spaced to end at right margin. The superscription is typed 16 spaces from top of the letterhead, starting at printed starting dot shown on all but engraved letterheads. The superscription is then in position for the window envelope GN-948-A, which should be used whenever possible for enclosing letters going outside the company. No punctuation appears at the end of any line of the superscription.

The body of the letter begins 2 spaces below the subject.

Complimentary ending is typed 2 spaces below the body approximately 3 spaces to the right of the center of the page and is in block form with the typed signature and signature title. The typed signature is 4 spaces below the complimentary ending and the signature title is immediately below the typed signature. The dictator's and typist's initials appear on the same line as the signature title and begin at the left margin.

Yours truly

D. P. DESK  
Supervisor of Office Standards

DPD:ER



RULES FOR TRANSCRIBING - These rules should be most explicit, leaving no question in the typist's mind. They will include the standard company form, whether block, indented or other; the correct typewriter settings for letters of varying length for example,

LETTERS CONTAINING UP TO 75 WORDS

SET MARGINS at 20, 66

DATE LINE: 18 line spaces  
from top of sheet

ADDRESS: 6 line-spaces  
below date line.

Other standards cover open or close punctuation, use of initials and figures, how "Attention of" is to be used, spacing, proper use of Gentlemen, Dear Sir & Dear Madam, what complimentary closes are proper, how to type dictator's title. This list is by no means complete. It merely suggests some of the points which the typist must decide every time she writes a letter.

RULES OF PUNCTUATION AND SYLLABICATION - A simple review of the fundamentals of the correct use of commas, colons etc., will repay the effort of including it. Also the rules of breaking up words for carry-over to the next line will refresh the typist's mind on a very important feature.

LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS - Since the accepted abbreviations of many words follow no logical rule, it is sensible to save time by listing in the manual those most commonly used by the company. For the most part they will only appear in reports,



interoffice correspondence and teletypewriter messages but some are used outside. For example - Retel = answering your telegram, Ea = each, Enc. = enclosure. Abbreviations of the States should be here, also.

WORD LISTS - Several varieties of word lists are commonly found, such as,

1. Words often confused, as affect and effect, principle and principal.
2. Words often misspelled, as accedè, embarrass.
3. Compound words, as per cent, so-called, turnover.
4. Technical words, as monolithic, spanner wrench, trunnion.

CARE OF EQUIPMENT - A few paragraphs or pages devoted to the most efficient layout of the desk, to the proper use of transcribing equipment, and the care of the typewriter will help the typist. Illustrations are particularly encouraged for this section, preferably simple, easily-understood line drawings.

SHORT-CUTS - There are many little tricks a typist is not taught in school. For example, how to feed envelopes for 50% increased efficiency: how to draw vertical & horizontal lines on a typewriter; how to make special characters like a star, a pound sterling, a cedilla; how to correct stapled pages. These short-cuts will make the typist a real expert on her machine.



SUGGESTIONS FOR OFFICE CONDUCT - The Manual is the logical place to instruct the typist in the company rules for office personnel. These may cover the rest-period regulations, smoking in the office, absences, personal appearance, use of the telephone. Here is where the wage-incentive would be completely explained, if there is one in effect.

### C. METHODS OF SUPERVISION

#### 1. SUPERVISION OF DICTATORS

There is only one way to supervise the quality of dictation and that is to read the letters being dictated. Obviously, in a better letter program, the most important phase is continuous, effective presentation of company policy in its outgoing letters. The need for constant checking is evident, then, to insure good tone, simple language, clear and concise phraseology, correct policy. The simplest method of supervision is to have carbons of the letters typed come regularly to the desk of the correspondence counselor.<sup>1</sup> For beginning dictators perhaps the actual letters can come for an OK before mailing. From these carbons and letters, the commonly recurring errors of all dictators can be caught for correction by the counselor; and special weaknesses noted for individual discussion. The errors can become the subject

1. Hotchkiss, Kilduff and Janis, Advanced Business Correspondence, New York, Harper Bros. 1947 Page 498.



of future bulletins or the basis of group conferences of dictators. Individuals needing special correction will tax the counselor's tact. Their initiative and originality must be preserved, while their bad habits are changed.

Companies are apt to differ in their manner of checking carbons, depending on the particular circumstances. For example, Sears Roebuck uses a large staff of well-trained young ladies in each branch to answer the enormous correspondence with customers. For the first year of their employment each letter is OKed by the correspondent's group-instructor and supervisor. Thereafter her work is periodically checked. <sup>1</sup>

At Dennison Mfg. Company the new correspondents in the Central Correspondence Dept. (handling adjustments, sales-by-mail, deliveries) write their letters in longhand for two or three weeks to be gone over by supervisor. Then, when they are on their own, their letters are spot-checked for several months. Also incoming mail is checked carefully for the first two weeks to see if new persons are causing difficulties outside. Every two or three months, one day's production of the whole department - 30 or 40 letters - is analyzed by the supervisor. She looks at extra carbons for.....

1. Mechanical arrangement -  
This is over and above  
the regular supervision  
by the transcription  
supervisor.

1. From interview with Miss M. Mulligan of the General Manager's Office, Boston Branch, December 31, 1947.



2. Quality - including tone, statements of policy, effective writing, down-right errors. 1

At Hood's Rubber Company in Watertown, Mass. the sales manager, whose department handles a large amount of important sales correspondence, puts so much importance on letters leaving his office, that each outgoing letter must cross his desk. In his absence, an assistant carries on. 2

It is unusual to have a top executive handling what may be considered by some a routine chore. However, this example points up the real value of letters as sales instruments.

A periodical audit of correspondence is made by the Lever Bros.' Literary Counselor. Emphasis is placed on the quality of the letters. Special carbons are made for this audit: on them the counselor jots down his comments on tone, conciseness, clarity and so on. The audit is carried on by mail, with carbons coming from the 15 division offices and 4 branch plants in the U. S., as well as the Executive Offices in Cambridge, Mass. 3

## 2. SUPERVISION OF TYPISTS

Wherever standards of appearance have been set up, there must be rigid supervision of the typists' work for com-

1. From interview with Lillian McCollum, Correspondence Supervisor in Framingham, Mass. Oct. 31, 1947.
2. From interview with Arthur Porter, Office Service Manager, November 3, 1947.
3. From sketch of Correspondence Control in the Lever Bros. Co. Used by permission of Charles E. Buck, the Literary Counselor.



parison with these standards. Where there is no central typing bureau, this supervision falls directly on the dictator. Usually, however, he is mainly interested in error of content, and in too much of a hurry to check for mechanical flaws. Indeed, it is quite likely he will not know how to look for them. For example, one authority made a comparison between letters of dictators written by them in longhand, and the same letters transcribed by expert typists. The longhand versions showed little familiarity with such details as punctuation, grammar and spelling. The typed letters, however, were usually perfect specimens. <sup>1</sup>

Where there is a central bureau it is standard practice for every letter to be proof-read by the supervisor or her assistant. <sup>2</sup> Here there is expert supervision; less than perfect letters are returned for correction or retyping before the dictator ever sees them. Usually records of errors are kept. If an incentive plan is in operation such errors will affect the bonus paid; or the errors, on a regular pay plan, will influence the rate of promotion.

1. Professor W. P. deMille of Boston University, in an interview Jan. 7, 1948 in Boston.
2. Carl H. Page, A Guide to the Organization and Operation of a Central Transcribing Department, New York Life Office Management Association, Page 116.



## CHAPTER VII

### SYSTEMATIZATION

To systematize correspondence means to control the activity of the letter-producing staff so as to get the most effective letters in the quickest possible time and at the lowest possible cost. Such control is achieved by standards set up to guide the activity.<sup>1</sup> This chapter will discuss the standards which may be set up to control correspondence, and the systems in which these standards may operate efficiently. The discussion will develop under the following general headings:

1. A Survey of Systematization in 21 Companies.
2. Standardization of Appearance.
3. Centralization vs. Decentralization of Dictators.
4. The Central Transcription Department.
5. The Mail Room.

One final step in the systematization of correspondence for economy's sake plus added control - the use of form letters - will be taken up in the next chapter.

#### A. A SURVEY OF SYSTEMATIZATION IN 21 COMPANIES

Before we swing into standards and systems, it may

1. Office Management - A Handbook, edited by Coleman L. Maze, New York, Ronald Press, 1947, Chap. 23 Page 727.



be interesting to examine the results of a survey I have just completed. This survey attempted to assess the extent of systematizing of correspondence among certain companies, which employ the elements of control to some degree at least. It was conducted by questionnaire among 31 large concerns, all of whom make some effort at control. The questionnaire used appears in the appendix with a table of the replies; also a list of the 21 firms who answered.

Analysis of the replies indicate the following general practices in the systematizing of correspondence.

1. CENTRALIZATION - 19 (of the 21) prefer dictators in each department rather than a central dictating bureau. 15, however, use a central transcribing bureau. Half use a stenographic pool; but 17 (including seven with pools) have stenos in each department too.
2. INCENTIVES - There is not too much use of incentive plans, evidently,....Only one firm - and that only occasionally - uses dictator - incentives. Only 5 use incentives for transcribers, although two claim an average increase of 25% in production through use of central transcribing.
3. SUPERVISION - Only 9 of the 21 attempt to check the quality of dictation and 5 of these do it periodically, only. 18, however check quality of the transcription and 14 do it daily.
4. TRAINING - The favorite method of training both dictator



and steno-transcriber is individual instruction. 18 train dictators thus; all train transcribers individually. 6 use a company course for dictators; 5 for typists. 7 use a dictator's manual; 11, a typist's manual.

5. INTEREST MAINTENANCE IN BETTER LETTERS - Only 8 use bulletins to maintain interest. 2 use pep talks occasionally for better letters. 5 use group conferences; 3 use other methods (including films and offers to pay tuition at school. It would seem not too much time is spent to maintain interest in better letters.

In summary, then, the major effort in systematizing correspondence would seem to be in centralizing the transcription function and supervising it carefully. Lesser efforts are expended in training the staff systematically. Still less attention is paid to increasing production through incentives; and practically no attempt is made to maintain interest in better letters.

The main value of this survey is to point up the findings of the survey made by the American Business Writer's Association which were reported in the introductory Chapter of this study. The ABWA survey indicated that very little was being done in the field of correspondence control; 'only 1 out of 4 firms did anything at all', seemed to be its finding after a preliminary analysis. My survey was aimed at those which did something. Even among them, it would seem that many of the elements of a complete control program are neglected.



## B. STANDARDIZATION OF APPEARANCE -

The "package" in which the message is wrapped is of sufficient importance to set up carefully designed standards to insure message-effectiveness. The elements of the package include the stationery which is used; the envelope used as a cover; and the placement of the parts of the letter on the stationery.

### 1. STATIONERY -

The main consideration in setting stationery standards is the character of the house. A bank with a reputation for solidity and conservativeness would tend to use a heavy, water-marked paper, whereas a mail-order house which stresses low prices to comparatively low cash-income purchasers may use a lesser grade paper. Otherwise its customers might feel they were paying for expensive paper. <sup>1</sup>

In general, however, as Hotchkiss says, "it is false economy to choose a cheap paper." <sup>2</sup> Not only will it fail to impress, but the difficulty of erasure may well lose the difference saved, in wastage by the typist. 20lb bond, 25% rag content is suggested by Haynes and Miller as a standard for outgoing letters. <sup>3</sup> 16 - lb bond, though, is used by many leading companies, v.g. Western Electric.

1. Benjamin Haynes and Irol Whitmore, Mechanics of Business Letter-writing, Knoxville Univ. of Tenn. 1942 Page 14.
2. Advanced Business Correspondence New York Harpers 1947 Page 499.
3. "How much does it cost to write letters" booklet, N.Y. Gregg Publishing Co. 1941 Page 6.



Onionskin or manila paper is usually used for file copies.

## 2. ENVELOPES -

As far as quality goes, the envelope should be the same as the letterhead. In order to reduce costs, however, the question of standardizing envelope procedure with window-envelopes is worth considering at some length. First used by Rasely 30 years ago on a company-wide scale for all correspondence, the window-envelope has its modern proponents also. <sup>1</sup>

Western Electric Company prescribes their use as far as possible in all correspondence. <sup>2</sup> Following the Rasely method, they print a dot on the letter-head where the inside address must begin to insure a perfect window-fold. Another method of typing the inside address is reported by American Business. Print a light triple line approximately two inches above the bottom of the letter, to mark the end of typing. Beneath this is placed the inside address. Probably this method is too revolutionary to gain any immediate acceptance: but it is being used by a company to advantage. <sup>3</sup>

The main advantages and disadvantages of window envelopes are sketched by W. H. Evans, national Secretary of NOMA in the NOMA Forum. <sup>4</sup> The advantages include:

1. Rasely used them at the Norton Co. Worcester, Mass. From an interview, one of several during December 1947, in Boston.
2. Correspondence Manual of the Company, revised Jan. 1947
3. As a feature under System and Business Management, American Business, July 1944, Page 43. The company is the Crystal Laundry, Inc. Dayton, Ohio.
4. Issue of April 1947, Page 20



1. No typing of outside address necessary.
2. No errors possible in repeating address.
3. Correspondence cannot get in wrong envelope.
4. Envelopes may be stocked in Out Mail Dept. only not in every desk in Transcribing Dept.

The disadvantages:

1. Window envelopes seem less "personal."
2. Appearance is poorer both in specially folded letter, and the envelope itself.
3. Time saved by not addressing is offset by the special folding necessary, due to the placement of the inside address, which may not always be uniform in long and short letters. (However, this may be overcome by using short stationery for short letters.)
4. More expensive than plain envelopes.

### 3. PLACEMENT OF LETTER PARTS -

Complete instructions to the transcriber for the placement of each part of a letter are necessary not only to save her time in setting up her machine but also to insure a good-looking letter every time.

Tempering current usage with basic rules of good proportion would develop a set of standards (for 8½ X 11 paper )



1

about as follows:

1. The top margin is between 2 and 2- $\frac{3}{4}$  inches from the top of the paper to the date-line, depending on the letter-length.
  2. The date-line is typed to the right of the letterhead.
  3. Between the date-line and inside address are 3 to 6 spaces depending on letter length.
  4. The inside address is blocked to the left margin, single spaced and requires no punctuation.
  5. The salutation is flush with the left margin, two spaces below the inside address, and is followed by a colon. If any Attention line is used it may be put two spaces below the address and two spaces above the salutation, or placed on the salutation line.
  6. The body of the letter is begun two spaces below the salutation and is single spaced, with double spaces between paragraphs. Each paragraph may start flush with the left margin or be indented five spaces.
  7. Left and right margins are from 1  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 2-1  $\frac{1}{4}$  inches wide: length of line in the body from 4 to 6 inches depending on the length of the letter.
  8. The complimentary close is two spaces below the last line of the body. It is placed to the right,
- 
1. Based mainly on Mechanics of Business Letter Writing by Benj. Haynes and Irol Whitmore, Knoxville Univ. of Tenn. 1942. Reference was also made to the Correspondence Manuals of Western Electric Co., Lyon Metal Products Co., & Employers' Group Insurance Co.



ending at the margin with a comma. Blocked with the complimentary close and two spaces below, is the company title: and four spaces below this is the dictator's title.

9. The dictator's name is typed flush with the left margin one space below the dictator's title line at the right. The stenographer's initials are typed directly beneath the dictator's name, at the left margin.
10. The bottom margin, from the steno's initials to the bottom of the letter is from 1-3/4 to 3-14 inches depending on the length of the letter.

#### 4. THE SIMPLIFIED LETTER -

There is appearing a trend, encouraged by NOMA, to a more functional letter form. The contribution of NOMA to this trend is the Simplified Letter. Based on the Norton Letter, used since 1917 by the Norton Co. in Worcester, Mass., its main points of departure from the conventional form are these:

1

1. An extreme left block format to save typist's time in moving carriage.
  2. No salutation: instead, a subject heading which forces the dictator to define his problem.
  3. No complimentary close.
  4. Use of the window envelope.
1. The Norton Letter, developed by Rasely, aroused much comment at the time of its introduction; however, it did not attract many imitators.



A sample of the Simplified Letter appears on page 119. For comparison, the Norton Letter as used today, follows on Page 120.

The objections to the extreme left format, which is the most impressive part of the Simplified Letter, but not the most important (subject heading is more important) are summarized as follows by Haynes & Whitmore: <sup>1</sup> There seems to be a lack of balance; the user may be accused of being eccentric, or lacking knowledge of accepted form, or of obviously trying to make an impression.

C. CENTRALIZED VS. DECENTRALIZED DICTATION -

There seems to be a general preference for dictators remaining in each department, rather than forming them into a central bureau.

1. Mechanics of Business Letter Writing, Knoxville Univ. of Tenn. 1942 Page 23.



NATIONAL OFFICE MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION  
2118 LINCOLN-LIBERTY BUILDING  
PHILADELPHIA 7

there is more to a truly  
SIMPLIFIED LETTER  
than simply dropping  
dear and yours truly

Dated Today

Miss Office Secretary  
Better Business Letters, Inc.  
1 Main Street  
Busytown, U.S.A.

HAD YOU HEARD?

There's a new movement under way to take some of the monotony out of letters given you to type. The movement is symbolized by the Simplified Letter being sponsored by NOMA.

What is it? You're reading a sample.

Notice the left block format and the general positioning of the letter. We didn't write "Dear Miss ---," nor will we write "Yours truly" or "Sincerely yours." Are they really important? We feel just as friendly to you without them.

Notice the following points:

- 1 Date location
- 2 The address
- 3 The subject
- 4 The name of the writer

Now take a look at the Suggestions prepared for you. Talk them over with your boss. But don't form a final opinion until you've really tried out The Letter. That's what our Secretary did. As a matter of fact, she finally wrote most of the Suggestions herself.

She says she's sold -- and hopes you'll have good luck with better (Simplified) letters.

VAUGHN FRY - RESEARCH & STANDARDS

Messrs O. J. McMunn, R. E. Shull, W. H. Evans

this is a  
SIMPLIFIED  
letter



NORTON COMPANY  
WORCESTER 6, MASSACHUSETTS

February 12, 1948

Mr. Albert J. Sullivan  
Burdett College  
156 Stuart St.  
Boston 16, Massachusetts

Yours February 10  
Visit Thursday February 19

We shall be glad to have you visit us on Thursday afternoon, February 19, if that is a convenient time for you, at say, 2 o'clock or following, to see our Mailing Department. Your interest in office procedure is appreciated and we hope we can be of some help to you in answering questions concerning our procedures.

Kindly ask for the writer when you reach our office. We are located north of the city center, about 3 miles, and our administration building is on New Bond Street, off West Boylston Street. We are enclosing a map for your convenience to describe our location.

NORTON COMPANY

A. R. Blodgett  
55

Assistant Office Manager

Enc.



With the exception of large mail-order houses like Montgomery-Ward and Sears - Roebuck, whose daily mail contacts with thousands of customers make it almost mandatory to set up a central bureau with a variety of specialists, few companies use this technique except in limited fashion. <sup>1</sup>

Dennison's Mfg. Co., for example, handles its sales inquiries and adjustments through a specialized dictating bureau, but other letter-writing functions such as purchasing, collection, traffic are confined to each department. <sup>2</sup> Another company handles all complaints from one bureau in order to control and reduce them more effectively. It is reasoned that a sounder adjustment policy may be developed, as well as a quicker uncovering of sore spots, than if each department handled its own complaints. <sup>3</sup> Proponents of the central bureau say: <sup>4</sup>

1. It eliminates the tendency of individual departments to become narrow-minded. It develops, instead, the idea of service and the need for holding the customers' goodwill.

2. Dictating specialists acquire

1. Sears' central bureau, for example is divided by product specialties. Certain dictators handle nothing but Hardware Dept. correspondence; others nothing but Plumbing Supplies, & so on. Based on interview with M. Mulligan of Sears, Boston General Manager's office in Boston, December 31, 1947.
2. Based on interview with L. McCallum, head of Central Correspondence at Framingham, Mass. Oct. 31, 1947.
3. Centralized Correspondence Departments, Policyholders' Service Bureau of the Met. Life Ins. Co. New York (undated) Page 9.
4. IBID pages 2 to 4.



a great deal of skill in "better letters."

3. Better control of the dictating function is possible, especially in the supervision of quality of content.

Probably these virtues are outweighed by the difficulties in such a scheme, such as:

1. To obtain correct information, the dictator must bother departmental clerks.
2. The dictator cannot be as well acquainted with the departmental problems and policies as a person in the department.

Granting then, that it is unlikely that centralized dictating departments will be generally accepted, the problem of standardizing dictating practice, which would be comparatively simple in the central bureau, becomes a rather difficult task. Proper instruction, buttressed with regular supervision, will of course do much to produce better letters and reduce their cost. Such instruction, besides promoting more effective expression, would attempt to set up better work habits, such as:

1

1. Requiring to be collected all data necessary before dictation. This means routing material through the Filing Dept., if necessary, before dictation. All calls must be made before dictation is attempted.

1. See Rita H. Hopf "Can Anything Be Done About Control of Cost of Dictation?" NOMA Proceedings 1939 Page 37.



2. Planning the dictation by jotting down marginal notes on letters to be answered; or making orderly mental notes for a letter which initiates exchange of correspondence.
3. Scheduling the work for the same time each day, preferably early in the morning before the unforeseen matters of the day crop up to prevent systematic dictation.
4. Allowing no interruptions during the dictating period. It is not the actual dictating time which builds up the cost of a letter but the stop-and-start process caused by interruption. A good rule is-treat the dictating period exactly as though the dictator was not in the office.

#### D. THE CENTRAL TRANSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT.

By gathering together the transcribing functions into one place, it is usually possible to reduce the cost of correspondence and at the same time to standardize the appearance of outgoing letters. There are two common methods of centralization: the stenographic pool and the central typing bureau.

##### 1. THE STENOGRAPHIC POOL -

The Stenographic Pool is a central service department organized to supply shorthand specialists, as needed, to all other departments. The main reasons for forming such a Pool are these:

1. To reduce the size of the stenographic staff by having proficient specialists perform the stenographic functions; stenos within departments are usually required only part time, and do other clerical duties to fill out their day.



2. To control more effectively the stenographic function; usually all letters typed in the Pool are checked for quality of transcription, viz. errors, erasures, placement; and the steno's time spent daily is recorded to point out inefficiencies which may be corrected.

1

Other uses of the Pool are:

1. To furnish help to departments whose work is such as not to require a permanent employee.
2. To fill in for absentees.
3. To help departments during peak loads of work.
4. To train future secretaries and key personnel. The traveling steno learns quickly the functions of all departments.

## 2. CENTRAL TRANSCRIBING -

As we saw in the survey reported earlier in this chapter, the element most commonly found in correspondence control is central transcription. This system is based on the use of the dictating machine. In the usual dictating machine (v.g. Dictaphone, Ediphone) the message is cut mechanically on a wax cylinder as the dictator speaks: a playback device reproduces the message through earphones for the transcriber to type directly. There are new types of equipment now coming into use which use a magnetic wire or a plastic disc instead of the wax cylinder, but the system, in which all are employed, is the same.

ADVANTAGES - Although central transcribing seems to be com-

1. See Handbook of Business Administration edited by W. L. Douglas, American Management Association, New York, McGraw - Hill Book Co. Page 942

2. The second group is usually the most  
difficult to handle, and it is  
often in this group that the most  
serious mistakes are made. The  
first mistake is to assume that  
the second group is the same as the  
first group.

3. The third group is the most  
difficult to handle, and it is  
often in this group that the most  
serious mistakes are made. The  
first mistake is to assume that  
the third group is the same as the  
first group.

4. The fourth group is the most  
difficult to handle, and it is  
often in this group that the most  
serious mistakes are made. The  
first mistake is to assume that  
the fourth group is the same as the  
first group.

5. The fifth group is the most  
difficult to handle, and it is  
often in this group that the most  
serious mistakes are made. The  
first mistake is to assume that  
the fifth group is the same as the  
first group.

ing more and more accepted by leading firms, there are still arguments pro and con.

1

Those who aregue for it, stress these points:

1. Operating Flexibility - Centralization facilitates the handling of peak loads. As volume in one type of work demands, specialized workers in one group can be shifted to meet the demand. Thus fewer employees are needed to handle the gross volume.
2. Personnel - The work may be divided into various grades of difficulty. The quality and quantity of the work of various workers may be graded; salaries may be standardized and a system of promotion developed.
3. Supervision - Rigid control of letter accuracy and appearance is possible; uniform and improved methods may be installed in place of the individualized styles which result if each department types its own letters. Work may be handed out on basis of difficulty to the various grades of personnel.
4. Training - The grading of work and personnel makes it possible to develop ability in an organized fashion from handling routine copying up to the most important executive correspondence.
5. Output - Quality will be uniform because a high standard may be required of all letters. Quantity will be measurable permitting impersonal and impartial judgment of ability.
6. Production Incentives - Because it is possible to measure production objectively, it is also possible to offer monetary incentives to increase production.

1. This discussion, pro and con, is based largely on Carl H. Page, A Guide to the Organization and Operation of a Central Transcribing Department, New York Life Office Management Association, 1940.



7. Equipment and Layout - Standardized equipment will reduce maintenance and permit interchanging of parts. All equipment is used constantly v.g. the typewriter is used all day, whereas in the regular office it may be used more effectively since uniform desk and filing arrangements result in an economy of space.

DISADVANTAGES - Even with these arguments for central transcribing, there are still those who claim it fails in these regards:

- 1..Delays in service might arise if peak loads of several types of work coincide.
2. Confidential work may become generally known.
3. Explanations and corrections are difficult because of lack of personal contact between dictator and typist.
4. Important assignments may not be given immediate attention.
5. It is difficult to persuade many top executives to use the machines.

However, as Carl Page points out, these objections can usually be overcome by proper planning and operations of the department plus a little salesmanship. <sup>1</sup> From the present trend to central transcription it would seem the advantages outweigh the disadvantages.

REDUCTION OF COSTS - Use of the central transcribing system generally reduces the cost of correspondence. At the Quaker Oats Co. This is indicated by the statement that busi-



ness increased, but no addition to personnel was necessary to handle the extra business.<sup>1</sup> And in a methods study at Gulf Oil Co. in Atlanta, Georgia, these figures were developed.<sup>2</sup>

1. The average time per letter for shorthand dictation was 7-2/3 minutes vs 3.4 minutes for machine dictation.
2. Average transcription time for shorthand was 8-3/4 minutes vs. 6.9 minutes for voice.
3. Salary costs were 10¢ for transcription of shorthand vs. 7-1/3¢ for voice.
4. 15% to 35% less people were required.
5. Less equipment was necessary. 2 machines worked 4 hours vs 4 machines working 2 hours.
6. Less overtime was necessary by letting routine work pile up while specials were rushed.

INCENTIVE PLANS - Since objective measurement of production is possible in the transcription department, an incentive plan may be installed to increase production and reduce costs still further. That it achieves these results is evident from the experience of several companies.

Dennison Mfg. Co. found their average production running as high as 180% of standard, expressed as 100%, after an incentive plan was begun.<sup>3</sup>

1. Eugene Whitmore "Do Business Letters Cost Too Much?" American Business July 1944
2. C. C. Fambrough, "Methods Study in Correspondence" NOMA Proceedings June 1941.
3. Interview Paul McBride, Office Service Mgr. Framingham, Mass. October 31, 1947.



Another company reports an increase from 102 strokes per minute to 144 strokes per minute on the department average over a period of 4 years, once an incentive plan was installed.<sup>1</sup>

A large insurance company reports costs of 1-1/3¢ per line and .8¢ per line before and after a bonus system was put in.<sup>2</sup>

A survey made of 12 companies showed the following:<sup>3</sup>

1. Carl H. Page...A Guide to the Organization and Operation of a Central Transcribing Department, N. Y. Life Office Management Association 1940 P. 173.
2. Edward N. Hay, "Cutting Correspondence Costs," American Business Nov. 1938.
3. IBID....



TABLE NO VII  
CORRESPONDENCE PRODUCTION IN 12 COMPANIES

<u>NUMBER OF TRANSCRIBERS</u>		<u>AVERAGE PRODUCTION OF ALL TRANSCRIBERS 5½ IN. LINES PER HOUR</u>	<u>RANGE</u>	<u>INCENTIVE PLAN</u>
1	20	187	----	YES
2	11	180	134-200	"
3	14	173	----	"
4	49	162	----	"
5	24	150	112-180	NO
6	12	136	112-190	"
7	17	135	95-168	"
8	33	125	-150	"
9	30	101	67-122	"
10	9	96	----	"
11	53	90	----	"
12	23	87	52-136	"

Edward N. Hay in American  
Business for November 1938.

The spaces, which are blank, were left unanswered in the survey. Notice that the highest production is found in the incentive-paying companies. The average in these companies runs from 162 to 187 lines per hour, while in the non-incentive companies, it runs from 87 to 150 lines per hour.



MEASUREMENT OF PRODUCTION - There are several possible ways to measure production. You can count

1. Cylinders
2. Letters
3. Lines
4. Sq. Inches of typing
5. Strokes

The first four methods are not generally used today. Counting cylinders or letters, although simple, is not accurate because of the variance in length. Counting lines or square inchest is more accurate, but even with special rules and gauges is complicated and long, at best.

The easiest, and only mechanical way of measuring typing, is by the cyclometer. This mechanical counter is easily installed in any standard typewriter and counts the number of strokes of the typewriter keys. The standard counter records one unit for every 240 key strokes, or the equivalent of 24 lineal inches of pica typing (10 strokes to the inch). In order to record the typist's production, it is only necessary to read the register before and after the work done. The disadvantage of this method is this: the kind of work done is not measured unless a more detailed record is kept.

INSTALLING THE INCENTIVE SYSTEM It is not possible in the scope of this report to go into the details of the various incentive plans.



The basic plans are these, and are customarily based on strokes: <sup>1</sup>

1. Salary plus Bonus - The average amount of work which can be done in a certain time is carefully computed by time-study methods. Normally, the work will be studied according to its grade of difficulty and various standards set up. Extra production by an individual typist in this given time is paid at a bonus rate.
2. Piece-rate Systems - Under this plan the typist receives as her compensation a basic rate per unit which is multiplied by the number of units produced. Rates for a variety of work are set by time study.
3. Group Bonus Plans - The theory of the group plan is that the employees will band together and if successful, each will share in the savings, in an effort to reduce the cost of production. The Bonus for increased production is usually distributed on a proportionate basis according to each employee's salary.

In all these plans errors are corrected either on the typists' own time, or on bonus time, without the bonus rate, which effectively reduces the amount of bonus. For work which cannot be reduced to a standard by time-study, the regular rate is paid, or in the piece-rate system an average of past earnings.

2

#### E. THE MAIL ROOM

1. Carl H. Page, A Guide to the Organization and Operation of a Central Transcribing Dept. N.Y. Life Office Management Association 1940. Also, Wage Incentive Plan for Dictaphone Operators.....Dictaphone Sales Corp. New York, 1930
2. Material in this section is based generally on Mail & Mailing by A. J. Sullivan, to be published July 1948 by Pitney-Bowes Co., Hartford, Conn.



The last steps in delivering correspondence to the postman include folding, stuffing envelopes, sealing and stamping. These operations are most effectively combined into one Mail Department. The Mail Department handles all the routine and mechanical processes necessary to handle correspondence both incoming and outgoing.

The Messenger Staff would operate out of the Mail Room. Messengers would make regular scheduled trips - suggested interval, 15 to 30 minutes - to fixed stations on their route. These stations usually will be the desks of dictators who have signed letters, plus fixed spots in other departments for miscellaneous mail v.g. File Department for routed mail and pieces to file; Book-keeping Department for invoices, statements, checks; Transcription Department for forms, fill-ins and so on.

The Mail Room Staff will also consist of stuffers, sorters, sealers, mail readers. This type of work being routine and repetitive in nature is best done in one place at one time. Simple machines are available to simplify, speed up and effectively control these operations. These include postage scales, postage meters and sorting racks; for the simple handling of incoming mail, envelope openers, time-stamps, and incoming sorting racks speed up the process.

It is a logical step in correspondence control to set up a Mail Room. It brings together in one place similar functions which have been scattered in many places throughout



the office. The following review of the functions of the Mail Room indicate how efficiency and economy result from its proper operation.

1. Morning incoming mail is opened, sorted and delivered to the proper place in the offices before the office staff arrives. The opening process is speeded by opening machines; the sorting, by trained readers, is aided by special compartmented racks from which the messengers pick up their deliveries.
2. Outgoing mail is prepared more efficiently in one place by specialists. Letters and other correspondence are folded rapidly when enough are available to set up standard procedure. Correct postage is more likely to be used. Better advantage is taken of Post-Office services. The sealing and stamping processes are more efficiently done simultaneously by the postage meter. This latter machine, which is only of advantage in a central mail handling section, also controls postage by recording automatically the amount used and remaining in the machine.



## CHAPTER VIII

### SYSTEMATIZATION (CONT'D.)

#### A. THE "FORM" LETTER

Many executives react violently to the very idea of "form" letters. They will point out vigorously all the abuses committed in the name of economy: the careless reproduction, the "canned" effect, the artificial attempts to get a personal letter reaction from a necessarily impersonal "form". And, of course, there is much to their case. Form letters are too often used merely to save money, with the details important for a good job skimmed disastrously.

What is a form letter? It has been defined as a "model or skeleton letter so composed that it may be employed in frequently recurring situations of a similar nature."<sup>1</sup> Properly used, the form letter can be worked into a correspondence system in many and varied ways; with care, there is no need for the abuses to creep in.

#### 1. ADVANTAGES AND USES

The advantages of using these 'model or skeleton letters' include the following:

1. The dictator is relieved of the boredom of dictating many letters with generally the same wording. 2

1. Carl H. Page, A Guide to the Organization and Operation of the Central Transcribing Department, N. Y. Life Office Management Association.....1940 Page 127.
2. IBID Page 128.



2. They are far less expensive: with no dictating time and reduced transcription time, the cost of a form letter is only a fraction of a personally dictated letter..... 1
3. A more effective letter for routine situations is possible: an expert writer creates a set of forms, adapting them precisely. A less experienced correspondent, using such forms can handle routine situations expertly..... 2

The uses of form letters are as many as there are routine situations wherein the same message is sent to a number of people. Professor Aurner suggests some of the more important uses: 3

1. As single sales-letters or follow-ups.
2. To answer inquiries.
3. To acknowledge payments.
4. To acknowledge orders.
5. In business promotions.
6. To handle routine adjustments.
7. To collect accounts.
8. To request references & check records.

There are three general types of "form" letter:

1. The Complete Form, which is printed in advance with space for fill-ins, only, by the typist (vg. name & address):

1. IBID Page 128
2. Robert R. Aurner, Effective Business Correspondence, Cincinnati, South-Western Publishing Co. 1945 Page 467.
3. IBID Page 468



2. The Master Letter, which the typist copies either exactly or with minor changes, as instructed by the dictator:

3. The Form Paragraph.

2. THE COMPLETE FORM

This is the only form letter which is usually recognized as such. It is printed almost completely, either by the multigraph process or from typewriter type in the printing shop.

In trying to make such a letter look like a personally dictated letter, the careless producer spoils it completely. The worst offenses occur in typing the inside address, and in stamping or printing the signature.

With regard to the inside address, there are two alternatives. First, not to use an inside address but so to design the form that its message begins directly - perhaps in headline fashion. The reasoning behind this seems sound. It is not possible to get much personal reference to the particular reader in a reproduced message. The reader realizes this, and accepts the message much as he does a newspaper advertisement. Combining a general statement with the personal touch of an inside address is merely trying to "fool" the reader, with the result more apt to irritate than to please.

The second alternative, where an inside address is felt to be justified, is to match the typing perfectly. There is possibly no worse offense against a good-looking letter, than to have the body of one intensity of type and the



inside address of a totally different intensity. The only way to guarantee a good match is to specify the same type face for printing the body, which is on the typewriter to be used for filling-in. It is easier to do this with the multigraph process than with the printer's typewriter type. Since the multigraph process uses a ribbon in inking, the chances are better of getting a letter which looks typed. Finally, when the typist fills in the name and address, she must be careful to use fresh ribbon to get the clean, sharp impression the press has given the rest of the letter.

As far as the signature goes, there is no substitute for a handwritten one. If care has been taken to give personal appeal to the rest of the form letter, a mechanically applied signature is false economy, because it is virtually impossible to disguise it. The wiser method, if a signature must be used, is to have a clerk with a good hand, write the name.

The complete form letter with fill-in is most commonly used for sales messages and collection series. The importance of each type of letter makes it evident that any poor impression will reduce the effectiveness. For example, a sales letter which enthusiastically persuades the reader in the past paragraph, to return an order or an inquiry to the personal attention of the writer whose name is obviously printed, probably in an unpleasant purple ink, cannot fail to suggest insincerity. Or consider the collec-



tion letter whose inside address is a light shade of black above the darker body type, which stresses in its message the personal interest of the credit manager in the reader's problem. The lack of harmony belies the interest.

### 3. THE MASTER LETTER

With this letter, it is possible to get much of the economy of the prepared-beforehand form, and still have all the effect and appearance of a personally dictated letter. Each letter is individually typed from carefully prepared models; minor changes, or inclusion of special facts are specified by the dictator. A Master Letter used by the LeCourtenay Co. of New Jersey to handle price inquiries will illustrate this type. <sup>1</sup> The model looks like this to the typist.

FORM #14

DATE

CUSTOMER'S NAME  
ADDRESS  
CITY

Gentlemen:

We acknowledge with thanks your inquiry of \_\_\_\_\_ a

and are pleased to quote as follows:

Parts for \_\_\_\_\_ b \_\_\_\_\_, Pump# \_\_\_\_\_ c \_\_\_\_\_  
(itemized list of parts)

The above price (s) are \_\_\_\_\_ d \_\_\_\_\_ f.o.b. Newark  
and shipment can be made \_\_\_\_\_ e \_\_\_\_\_ weeks after receipt  
of your order.

Truly yours,

LeCourtenay Company  
Dictator's Name  
Title

1. "How to Reduce Dictating Time," American Business June 1944.



in the lower margin he notes the form number and other notes needed to make an intelligent reply. The customer's letter will look like this when the typist gets it.

December 8, 1947 *u*

Gentlemen:

Please quote price and delivery on the following parts for

*u* pump #2467 Type AB46 *R*

2 Shaft Sleeves

- *B2* \$10<sup>00</sup> each

2 Impeller Rings

- *B2* \$7<sup>00</sup> each

2 Case Rings

- *B2* \$10<sup>00</sup> each

Your prompt reply will be appreciated.

Yours truly

John Doe Company

*d = net*  
*e = 6 to 8 weeks*  
*J. G. Smith*  
*Chas. L. Smith* When the typist has finished, the outgoing letter

has all the earmarks of one personally dictated - friendly, complete, to the point. This is how it appears.

December 10, 1947

John Doe Company  
333 Main St.  
Bridgewater, Mass.

Gentlemen:

We acknowledge with thanks your inquiry of December 8, and are pleased to quote as follows:

Parts for Type AB46, Pump #2467

2 Shaft Sleeves, B2 \$10.00 each

2 Impeller Rings, B2 \$7.00 each

2 Case Rings, B2 \$10.00 each



The above prices are net, f.o.b. Newark, and shipment can be made in 6 to 8 weeks after receipt of order.

Truly yours,

LeCourtenay Co.  
J. A. Smith  
Order Service Dept.

There is a great deal of flexibility in this type of form letter. It lends itself to many types of routine situations. As the LeCourtenay Co. discovered by analysis of carbons, this form lends itself well to quotations, to notices of shipping dates and changes, to purchasing department requests for bids and shipping dates, and to accounting department routine credit letters.

#### 4. THE FORM PARAGRAPH

Many times the first two types of form letters are not elastic enough to cover all possible situations. The inquirer above for example, might have complicated his request by asking about tolerances, uses of the material, quantity prices, etc. Since the model letter will take a limited number of fill-ins, the form paragraph system is designed to handle such cases.

The form paragraph is a ready-made paragraph or a section of a letter which deals with one main point or idea. It is constructed so that it may be used, in combination with other such paragraphs, to supply specific information without



a personally dictated letter.<sup>1</sup> The combination suggests the interchangeable parts system basic in mass production of machinery: each paragraph fits with certain others to make a letter, just as a Ford carburetor fits any Ford.

To compile a set of form paragraphs is partly a job of analysis, partly a job of creation. Carbons are collected over a long enough period to discover by analysis what the recurring situations are. Then the form paragraphs may be created to fit the situations.

Hotchkiss gives a good example of this process using the adjustment department as a specific example:<sup>2</sup>

1. The collection of extra carbons of all outgoing adjustment letters for two or three weeks.
2. Classification of these carbons. The obviously individual and personal treatments would be put aside. The others would probably fall into these six types:

1. Delay in shipment
2. Goods damaged in transit
3. Goods not as ordered
4. Shortage in goods received
5. Goods lost in transit
6. Quality of goods unsatisfactory

1. George B. Hotchkiss, Edward J. Kilduff & J. Harold Janis, Adv. Business Correspondence N. Y. Harper Bros. 1947 Page 505.
2. IBID Page 510, 511.



3. Study of each type. Concentrating on one at a time, a number of reasons would appear to explain why this one type of adjustment exists. Some of the reasons for "Delay in Shipment" might be:

1. Shortage in stock
2. Order not received
3. Order misplaced
4. Shipment made recently

And so on.

4. Planning the form paragraph. Taking up the first reason for delay in shipment - shortage in stock - study is made of the letters in the subdivision to discover the best way to handle this situation. Then it can be decided how many ideas (paragraphs) will be needed to cover it, and what each idea should be.

5. Writing the form paragraph. Having decided on the number of ideas and what they should be, the writing is easy. The best paragraph of the letters just analyzed may be adapted, or good features selected for development. There should be at least two "openers" and two "closers" or paragraphs which begin and end the letter.

6. Polishing the set of form paragraphs. The final step is to test the fit of the various paragraphs with each other. Poor connection and overlapping will be the commonest faults. But a little rewriting can correct these and any other "bugs."



The same steps from 3 to 6 would be repeated to cover all subdivisions and types. When this job is done each paragraph is indexed for easy reference. The index would be descriptive of the paragraph and numbered: 1  
 For example, under this heading.....  
     C 100-120 ORDER MISPLACED AND ORDER NOT RECEIVED, we  
 might find:

C 100 Opener  
     C 101 Opener  
     C 105 Apology for misplacing order  
     C 107 Unable to find order  
     C 110 Send duplicate order  
     C 111 Closer (order misplaced)  
     C 112 Closer (order not received)

Suppose, then, the dictator is called upon to write a letter covering an order not received. Either on the customer's letter or on a simple form to be attached to it, he will jot C101, Mar. 21, Mar. 3, standard fittings, C107, C110, C112. The typist will refer to the manual in which all form paragraphs are listed, and type to the customer these paragraphs under the proper inside address:  
 Gentlemen:

We are sorry to learn from your letter of Mar.21,  
 C101      that you have not received your order of Mar.3,  
           for standard fittings.

We have made a careful examination of our files



C107 and records, but have failed to find that the order  
was ever received by us. Of course, it is possible  
that it went astray in the mails.

So that we may be able to fill your requirements as  
C110 promptly as possible, will you send us by return mail  
a duplicate order?

We regret very much that your original order was not  
C112 received for we should have been most happy to fill  
it promptly.

There are certain errors to be avoided in the construction of form paragraphs. <sup>1</sup> Mentioned above were the commonest: poor connection, i.e. the paragraph cannot be interchanged well; and overlapping, i.e. information in one paragraph overlaps information in any other. Another error is having a paragraph lack unity. Each paragraph must be complete in itself, covering one point only, but that sufficiently. And perhaps the worst error of all is so polishing the language of the paragraph that it does not sound like a personally dictated letter. It is better to leave some naturalness and even awkwardness in the expression to achieve the personal touch.

1. IBID Page 514



APPENDIX A

The following companies replied to the questionnaire which requested information on the extent of correspondence control in their organizations. On the next page is a copy of the questionnaire which I used, with a breakdown of the replies in the margin.

The analysis of the figures is found on Page 111, Chapter VII.

American Optical Company, Southbridge, Mass.

American Telephone and Telegraph Company, New York

Bank of Italy, San Francisco, California

Barrett Company, New York

Caterpillar Tractor Company, Peoria, Ill.

Commercial Investment Trust, New York

Converted Rice, Inc. Houston, Texas

Eastman Kodak Company, Rochester, New York

General Electric Company, Lynn, Mass.

Jewell Tea Company, Chicago, Ill.

Lyon Metal Products, Aurora, Ill.

Montgomery-Ward, Chicago, Ill

National City Bank, New York

Norton Company, Worcester, Mass.

Office Management Services, Inc., Hartford, Conn.

Provident Mutual Life Insurance Company, Phila., Pa.

Ralston Purina Company, St. Louis, Mo.

# APPENDIX A

The following companies are listed in the order in which they were organized, beginning with the oldest and ending with the latest. In the case of companies which have been reorganized, the date of the original organization is given, with a note that the company has been reorganized. The date of the reorganization is also given.

1. American Optical Company, established 1846.  
2. American Telephone and Telegraph Company, established 1876.  
3. Bank of Italy, established 1851.  
4. Bell Telephone Company, established 1876.  
5. International Telephone Company, established 1895.  
6. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
7. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
8. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
9. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
10. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
11. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
12. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
13. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
14. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
15. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
16. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
17. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
18. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
19. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.  
20. Commercial Union Trust Company, established 1854.

Southern Pacific R. R., San Francisco, California

Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, St. Louis, Mo.

Western Electric Company, New York

Western Union Company, New York



INFORMATION FOR THESIS: CORRESPONDENCE CONTROL

toward an MBA from Boston University, Boston.

1. CENTRALIZATION:

YES    NO

Does your firm use

(a) Central dictating dept. or.....	3	18
(b) Dictators in each dept.....	19	2
(c) Central machine-transcription dept.....	15	6
(d) Dictating machines, generally or.....	16	5
(e) Stenographic pool or.....	10	11
(f) Stenos regularly in each dept.....	17	4

2. INCENTIVES:

Does your firm use

(a) Incentive plan for dictators v.g.periodical contest based on sample problem, with appropriate reward, or group conferences of correspondents with rating of quality of letters.....	1	20
(b) Incentive plan for transcribers		
1. Individual production.....	5	16
2. Group production.....	0	21
3. Based on motion - study standards.....	5	16
4. Measurement in (check one) <u>Strokes</u> Lines      Letters.....		16
5. Marked improvement in produc- tion over pre-incentive, about 10% 25% 50%.....		25

# REVISIONS TO THE PLAN : (continued)

Items to be revised by the following :

NO.	REVISION
-----	----------

10	1	(a) Revised schedule for the year 1961
11	2	(b) Revised schedule for the year 1962
12	3	(c) Revised schedule for the year 1963
13	4	(d) Revised schedule for the year 1964
14	5	(e) Revised schedule for the year 1965
15	6	(f) Revised schedule for the year 1966
16	7	(g) Revised schedule for the year 1967

## REVISIONS :

Items to be revised :

17	8	(a) Revised schedule for the year 1968
18	9	(b) Revised schedule for the year 1969
19	10	(c) Revised schedule for the year 1970
20	11	(d) Revised schedule for the year 1971
21	12	(e) Revised schedule for the year 1972
22	13	(f) Revised schedule for the year 1973
23	14	(g) Revised schedule for the year 1974
24	15	(h) Revised schedule for the year 1975
25	16	(i) Revised schedule for the year 1976
26	17	(j) Revised schedule for the year 1977
27	18	(k) Revised schedule for the year 1978
28	19	(l) Revised schedule for the year 1979
29	20	(m) Revised schedule for the year 1980
30	21	(n) Revised schedule for the year 1981
31	22	(o) Revised schedule for the year 1982
32	23	(p) Revised schedule for the year 1983
33	24	(q) Revised schedule for the year 1984
34	25	(r) Revised schedule for the year 1985
35	26	(s) Revised schedule for the year 1986
36	27	(t) Revised schedule for the year 1987
37	28	(u) Revised schedule for the year 1988
38	29	(v) Revised schedule for the year 1989
39	30	(w) Revised schedule for the year 1990
40	31	(x) Revised schedule for the year 1991
41	32	(y) Revised schedule for the year 1992
42	33	(z) Revised schedule for the year 1993

3. SUPERVISION:

Does your firm check

YES    NO

(a)	Quality of dictation (i.e. tone, information, courtesy, unnecessary words, etc.....	9	12
(b)	By correspondence supervisor.....	5	
	Officer Manager,.....	2	
	Other (reported as dept. head).....	2	
(c)	How often daily.....	4	
	weekly.....	7	
	monthly.....	5	
(d)	Quality of transcription (i.e. appearance errors, erasures, etc.....	18	3
(e)	By correspondence supervisor, transcription supervisor.....	16	
	Other.....	2	
(f)	How often daily.....	14	
	weekly.....	1	
	monthly.....	3	

4. TRAINING:

Are dictators trained by

(a)	Company course.....	6	15
(a)	Conducted by correspondence supervisor.....	3	
	Outside expert.....		
	Other.....		
(b)	Individual instruction.....	18	3
(c)	Dictators manual.....	7	14
(d)	Periodical bulletins.....	6	15

Are (stenos and transcribers trained by

(a)	Company course.....	5	16
(b)	Individual instruction.....	21	
(c)	Typists' manual.....	11	10



5. MAINTENANCE OF INTEREST IN BETTER LETTERS

Does your firm use	YES	NO
(a) Periodical bulletins to stimulate improvement.....	8	13
(b) Pep talks by correspondence supervisor.....	2	19
Top officials.....		21
Outside lecturer.....		21
(c) Group conferences to discuss problems of better letters.....	5	16
(d) Other.....	3	



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